

LONDON READER

of Literature, Science, Art, and General Information.

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No. 1448.—VOL. LVI.]

FOR THE WEEK ENDING JANUARY 31, 1891.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



["ONE CAN NEVER REASON WITH A MADMAN, MR. LASCELLES!" LADY BRIDGEWORTH SAID.]

A GREAT COST.

CHAPTER XVII.

It was wonderful how quickly the time passed in town when the day was manipulated by so clever a brain as Lady Bridgeworth's.

Once the real business of shopping and dressmakers had been attended to, she provided her young guests with all such amusements as was to be obtained in London in the winter season.

Dinners small and well chosen, afternoon teas, concerts, theatres—Barbara scarcely had time to breathe, and certainly this vision of new London proved to be a very different thing to the miserable, dreary one she had known before.

Against both Josephine's and Muriel's wish she had gone one day to look up her humble friend Mrs. Webster; but when she reached the old familiar shop in the dirty, dingy street she found the name changed, and learned that the family in whose humble house she and Cyril had lodged so long had

migrated to another quarter of the metropolis, and no one could give her the address.

There had been a flutter of hope in her heart that she might have found some news of her brother; but though there were a few letters left for Mrs. Webster and her husband, there was nothing for her—not a word or sign to show that Cyril even lived.

She drove back to the fashionable street where Lady Bridgeworth's big house was situated sorrowful and quiet. Happy, wondrously, marvellously happy as she was, she could never be wholly content while she was separated from Cyril by this veil of mystery; and it hurt her more deeply than she ever let herself realise, that the one being for whom she had suffered and sacrificed so much could evince so little love or thought of her as to have left her so heartlessly to a pitiful fate.

Josephine's heart beat more easily when she read the girl's troubled face. It was her constant dread that at any moment Cyril Vereker might emerge from his seclusion; and apart from her own individual reason for shirking this, was the knowledge that Barbara

would have a very sturdy champion in her brother, and one with whom she, Josephine Bridgeworth, could never fight.

Muriel kissed Barbara tenderly. She understood the girl's yearning and disappointment without words. Did she not love her brother so dearly, so tenderly?

"We have a delightful invitation for you," Josephine said, that same day at luncheon. "Muriel was a little doubtful at first whether we should accept it, but I fancy she has thawed now."

"I am so hurt with Julian," Muriel said, hastily responding to the look in Barbara's beautiful eyes. "He—he has been so inconsiderate in so many things. But, after all, he is my brother, and so—"

"And so—you forgive him?" Josephine finished. "Of course you are very fond of this naughty Julian, *mignonne*? Come now, confess!"

Muriel coloured sometimes. She scarcely could have told why Josephine's voice and manner jarred on her.

"Naturally I am fond of Julian," she said, quietly. "But I see very little of him, and I

do not, could not love him as I love Humphrey. They are so different."

Barbara's lovely eyes met the speaker's, and a look of absolute sympathy passed between them.

Lady Bridgeworth laughed shortly.—

"We must all agree as to Sir Humphrey's perfections, and you are to be envied with such a brother, *mignonne*. Nevertheless, do you know I was charmed with Mr. Lascelles? He is very handsome!"

"Not handsomer than Humphrey!"

"And so clever!"

"Not so clever as Humphrey!"

Josephine laughed.

"You dear, sweet, loyal little thing! Well now, you will not allow Julian anything."

"Yes, indeed," Muriel said, hastily. "He is clever and so fascinating. I always say Julian could charm a snake off a tree, but—" Muriel stopped with a sigh.

"But he is not Humphrey," Barbara finished very softly. Then she looked across at Josephine, "But what is the invitation?"

"Tea and music in his studio. I have heard so much of Julian Lascelles' studio. I am told he has some tapestry and armour and other curios which are almost priceless."

Muriel bit her lip. She knew only too well at what price all Julian's eccentricities and extravagances had been purchased.

"I have not yet seen them," was all she said; but her sense of justice rose again for the selfish, handsome, idle young man who gave Humphrey so many anxious days, and had reduced the old home and property to such terrible small proportions through his follies.

"Your future brother-in-law is disposed to fall in love with you, Barbara," Lady Bridgeworth went on. "He simply raved about your photographs. The proofs arrived just as he was here, and we took the liberty of opening them. You don't mind, dear?"

"Oh, no!" Barbara said, hurriedly, but she did mind, for she had wanted Humphrey to be the first to see and choose his favourite from among the photographs which had been taken at his express desire.

"I am afraid Julian will make you very vain, Baba," Muriel said, as lightly as she could; but the truth was, she was by no means pleased at Julian's sudden visit, and wished, in a vague sort of way, that this proposed afternoon in his studio could be prevented. She felt, too, in the same vague way, that Lady Bridgeworth was as much determined to go as she was disinclined. Barbara's sensitive nature divined that there was a jarring note somewhere, yet could not quite realise where it came from, or why it was there.

She looked across at Muriel as she spoke.

"Humphrey would like us to go?" she asked, hurriedly.

Lady Bridgeworth answered laughingly.—

"We have Sir Humphrey's most emphatic consent. Muriel telegraphed off at once, says little person, and she has his answer in her pocket. Show it to Barbara, *mignonne*!"

"I thought it was the best thing to do,"

Muriel said, making her explanation to Barbara with her eyes as well as her words. "For well you know, both of you, that things have not been very very pleasant between Humphrey and Julian, and I thought Humphrey's wishes should be consulted."

Barbara read her lover's telegram.

"Certainly accept invitation. I am glad for you both to go. Tell my darling to enjoy herself."

The girl blushed at the last words, and her heart thrilled. How good, how sweet, how true he was!

"So now you see you can make up your mind to a most charming afternoon. You are fond of music and pictures, Barbara, so you will be in your element."

Josephine appeared to be in a most delightful humour. She always looked her best in the winter time. Furs and velvete suited her hard, yet almost regal cast of face; and she had never looked handsomer than when they drove off in the afternoon to the house in

Mayfair, which Julian Lascelles had made renowned for the unique entertainment he provided for society, and the marvellous and beautiful things he had gathered together about him.

She was full of laughter and bright chat this afternoon; and her tact was such that she infected both her companions with her humour, and brushed away any constraint that might have existed.

Julian was at the door to receive them himself. He greeted Barbara with warmth, and could scarcely conceal the surprise and admiration he felt at sight of his brother's affianced wife.

As to Barbara, she imagined herself in fairyland. She had never conceived anything more exquisite than this house in her dreams or imaginations. All was perfect, and the host who was so like, yet so unlike, Humphrey, seemed to fit in with it all in the same perfect way.

Julian Lascelles was, in truth, a far more handsome man than his brother. He had scarcely a flaw in his face, the features were so regular, the eyes dreamy and beautiful, the expression full of charm. He was, however, Sir Humphrey's inferior in height, and had altogether a slender and almost effeminate air. Still he was undeniably handsome, and Muriel spoke rightly when she said he had fascinations too.

He had managed to dispel the shadow from her face by the time he had ushered them into the studio; and Barbara found herself wondering, in a vague sort of way, how it could be possible that there could have been any quarrel between this man and Humphrey.

She wandered round the room, looking at all the artistic and curious things there, as Julian Lascelles said to Lady Bridgeworth, who received the words with a forced smile,—

"The most beautiful thing there!"

Before ten minutes had gone, Julian's surprise at this girl's beauty had become tinged with the envy and jealousy that clouded his every thought of his elder and more fortunate brother.

Muriel's almost cold, nervous manner with him had always been a grievance, though he had never tried in the smallest way to win his sister's love; and now Barbara's absolute indifference to his handsome face and eloquent eyes, and her undoubted devotion to Humphrey, went so easily by the ready blush and tender smile whenever her lover's name was mentioned, was something more than annoying to him.

He devoted himself to Lady Bridgeworth, whose ready admiration for him was exceedingly pleasant to him.

Josephine guessed the drift of his thoughts, and though she saw in this a probable and very strong assistance to her plans, she did not intend to avail herself of it immediately.

"You must get Sir Humphrey to let you sit to Mr. Lascelles. I am sure he would make a charming picture!" she said to Barbara after tea had been brought in and served by Julian's Indian servant—a strange, silent, picturesque man, in his many-colored garments.

Barbara blushed, and then smiled.

"I am sure Humphrey will be very glad," she said, slowly, her young heart immediately conceiving the sweet hope that she might some day be the means of healing the sore between the two brothers.

Julian answered her smile readily.

"I should like to paint you all!" he said, glancing round at the three faces. "Lady Bridgeworth, you must promise to sit to me. I have never painted you yet, Muriel, only that little sketch which I did from memory," he pointed to a canvas on the wall. "I am afraid it is not very like you, dear little sis!"

Muriel rose and went across to it, and he stood leaning one hand on her shoulder. The girl was touched at this small evidence of remembrance in the brother whom she had almost taught herself to believe had not even a grain of affection for her.

"I think it is more than like," she said, in her pretty, gentle way; then colouring a little more, and putting her hand into his, "dear Julian, I am so glad you like to have me here."

Julian accepted his sister's affection with charming warmth; his vanity was gratified, but his heart was not touched. Muriel and Barbara, arm linked in arm, went wandering round the studio while Julian seated himself at the piano, and played in a soft, half-tone sort of way to Josephine, who was attracted by this man, and yet who felt a great contempt for him rising in her breast. He was too much akin to her own nature to win any other feeling. The faint resemblance in him to Humphrey only served to whet the keenness of her desire to make her longing for Barbara's lover grow more definite and absolute. The very difference of Humphrey's nature from her own made him more desirable to her.

She was a curious mixture, poor, proud, selfish, reckless Josephine Bridgeworth; for, with all her yearnings for and respect of what was good, noble, honourable, true, she made no effort, seemed to have no desire to tune her own character into harmony. Just as she fathomed and understood Julian Lascelles, so in her turn was she fathomed and understood by him. He read beneath her suavity. He saw her hatred glittering behind her mask of affection. For Barbara he felt that he need not indulge in much envy of his brother's good fortune, for it was more than probable that good fortune would miscarry, aided by the tact of this handsome woman of the world, with her ready wit and brilliant conversation.

He sank his voice into a confidential whisper as the two girls wandered away into the odd nooks and corners.

"She is a dainty, little creature!" he said, as his fingers wandered over the keys. Julian dabbled in several branches of art, succeeding in all in a sort of spurious fashion, yet having no real knowledge, heart or perception for that which he attempted.

Josephine smiled her cold smile.

"She is distinctly beautiful!" she answered, as she unlocked her sealskin, and flung it off her shapely shoulders.

Julian assented.

"Yet it is to me strange," he said, in a musing sort of way, "that Humphrey should have chosen such a wife, a shy schoolgirl, with nothing but a lovely face as credentials. He has always preached the gospel of family pride to me. Surely he is making some inquiries about her, Lady Bridgeworth? After all—you will forgive the pessimism of the remark—a woman's face, however lovely and ingenious, is not the strongest credential in the world."

"Sir Humphrey will listen to neither your pessimism or my worldly wisdom," Josephine said, lightly smoothing the back of her well-fitting glove as she spoke.

Julian looked at her through his half-closed eyes. He felt that there was something more than an ordinary woman's jealousy at work in this matter.

"Have you spoken to him?" he asked, gently.

She shrank back.

"Oh, no, not I!" laughing slightly.

"I have saved myself much useless trouble. One can never reason with a madman, Mr. Lascelles."

"True!" Julian said, playing on in a dreamy fashion—he kept his eyes fixed on the keys. The spirit of malignant mischief was latent in this man. His old impatience and jealous dislike for his brother, his annoyance at Barbara's absolute indifference, all assisted the mischief to ripen.

He laughed softly to himself.—

"I suppose, poor old chap, he is very much gone?" he said, just turning to Josephine.

He saw the effort she had to put on herself. The sudden blush, and then paling in her face,

the stiffening of her lips, answered far better than her words.

"He is undoubtedly very much infatuated."
"It is a serious thing," Julian said to himself.

"Humphrey has never been a flirt, and he is just one of those humpy individuals who, when they do fall in love, fall for their lifetime. Really, I think it behoves me as his brother," a smile curling the lip beneath his moustache, "to do my best to prevent him making a fool of himself. You have been so kind and attentive in looking after me, old chap, the least I can do is to return the compliment. If you must have a wife, why, I think I know the very woman to suit you."

He was talking on slowly, while he thought all this, discussing Barbara and her possible origin and parentage.

"She never speaks of her family? Strange! Also, you say Humphrey refuses to make any sort of inquiries until after the marriage? That seems to me," Julian said, with that strange smile of his, something after the fashion of looking the door when the horse has been stolen; however, we must make all sorts of excuses for love's young dream. Vereker, Vereker," he went on, in a musing sort of way, "the name is good, but is probably assumed. I ran against a young fellow about a year ago called Cyril Vereker, as had a scamp as one could wish to meet he was!"

"And is Barbara's brother?" Josephine said, hurriedly. She rose and drew her cloak about her. "I think we must be taking our departure, Mr. Lascelles; we have given you quite a visitation. It is already nearly six o'clock, and we are going to the theatre."

Julian rose at once.
"So late! How time flies! We must find my two sisters. I suppose they are deep in mutual confidences about their beloved Humphrey."

Josephine smiled, and let him adjust her cloak.

"You must come and see me," she said. Julian, of course, declared it would be his pleasure to call on Lady Bridgeworth every day if she would permit him.

"We must be friends," he said, in his most charming way; and to himself he said, "So the plot thickens. My lady has her secret, and a double reason for wishing this girl ill. I must think this over!"

The result of his cogitations was satisfactory.

"The marriage must be prevented," he said to himself, as he dressed for dinner. "At first I only saw a chance of giving my dear prig of a brother something to think about, and so pay him out for all his meddling, prating interference; but now—now, Julian, my boy, there is a very different reason. The future will be decidedly satisfactory for you, I fancy, when Lady Bridgeworth becomes your sister-in-law, and is very much under your power. I must take a little trouble about her ladyship. I have got a good clue, and can pretty well guess the end. With Lady Bridgeworth's income at my disposal," Julian said, as he surveyed his handsome face with sincere complacency, "life will be really worth living, even in this beastly climate!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

The fortnight of Humphrey's absence was just at an end, and the trousseau was nearly all ready. Barbara had written a sweet little letter every day down to Rochester Rectory, detailing the events of the shopping, and telling Mrs. Griffiths all the interesting news she could gather.

She never repeated her thanks in these letters. She felt that Owen and his mother knew how deep, how true, how indescribable her gratitude to them was, and she felt, moreover, that they were better pleased by her silence.

Mrs. Griffiths was charmed by these letters. They were almost a revelation to her, evincing

such much broader thoughts and touches of mental power than she had credited the gentle young creature with.

"The girl has a fine character. She will be a noble woman!" she said to her son, after she had given him one of these letters to read. "I am so glad, Owen, for I confess sometimes I have been a little fearful for her future. Now I see that should her beauty go as her youth must one day, she will have other attractions to bind her husband to her, and to fit her for the great position Heaven has given her."

Owen read the letter carefully.

"I don't think I am so surprised as you, dear mother," he said. "I felt there was something stronger in little Barbara than one could read on the surface. Poor child, it is a pleasure, nay, a happiness, to me that she has drifted into such a haven. How strange life is, and what a merciful, generous Power we have above us! This child's path, that was so crooked, is now so clear and beautiful. It is a great pleasure also to me, mother," Owen Griffiths added, "to find I was mistaken in Lady Bridgeworth's nature."

Mrs. Griffiths was silent. Not even to her son, from whom she had no secrets, would she put into words the vague sort of uneasiness that always clung about Josephine and her attitude to Barbara.

Mrs. Griffiths found it a hard, almost an impossible, task to associate this suave, generous, warm, affectionate woman with the one who had stood before her that summer morning, and spoken such blither, insolent words, and all because of little Barbara.

"Heaven forgive me if I am wrong!" the gentle lady said to herself; "but I doubt—I fear sometimes. It is not clear to me."

She wrote back to Barbara every day, and often to Muriel, whom she had grown to love.

"The child is going to be a peacemaker!" she said, when one day a letter came, full of Julian and his doings; and the thought was pleasant to them both, for Muriel had spoken so often of the sorrow this brother had caused herself and Sir Humphrey.

On the very day Humphrey was to have arrived in town Barbara experienced an almost terrible disappointment. A telegram arrived in his stead. It was very curt, as telegrams usually are, and said that his return must unfortunately be delayed for a few more days, to his great regret.

Muriel was astonished and alarmed at this move, and her fears were proved to be well founded when the next morning post brought her a letter from Humphrey, evidently scribbled while in pain, saying he had a slight accident, and must lie perfectly still for a week or a fortnight.

"Don't frighten Barbara," he wrote. "It's a mere nothing, baby, and I shall be as right as possible with a few days' rest. Break it to her gently. Shan't be able to write easily to her or you, I am so dreadfully disappointed. I could almost forget I am a man, and indulge in a good cry. Kiss my darling, and take care of her, Muriel. I am so pleased about Julian."

Muriel's first thought had been to tell Barbara this news as gently as possible; but, as luck would have it, she determined to go to Josephine first.

"Don't dream of telling her, at least not for a day or so," Lady Bridgeworth said, hurriedly and firmly. "You know what a nervous little thing she is. We shall have her seriously ill if we tell her Humphrey is in bed, and cannot move. I assure you I consider the girl to be so delicately organised, I should dread the consequences."

"But," Muriel looked troubled and sad, "I must tell her something, Josephine. You see, Humphrey says he can't write, I am awfully afraid he must be dreadfully bruised and shaken. I shall telegraph to Dawson, that's the agent, you know, and tell him to let me know everything. But what shall I say to Barbara?"

Josephine was silent a moment. Her heart was beating quickly. Fate had smiled at the very moment! Could anything be more

fortunate? At all hazards, she must keep Barbara in ignorance of the truth of Sir Humphrey's silence and absence, and once this was accomplished, she must act more definitely.

"The best thing you can do," she said, quietly, and as though she were really considering poor Barbara to the very best in her power, "is to say you have heard from Sir Humphrey, that he is compelled to go to Ireland about that property he spoke of the other day. He will be unable to write at all—most probably for a week, and he has asked you to tell Barbara this as gently as possible."

Muriel's pretty face was shadowed. She hated lying and deceiving, and had never done such a thing in her life before.

"I—I don't think I can do—" she commenced, hurriedly, and then ceased, for at that moment Barbara came in.

The girl was looking very fragile. The disappointment of the day before had given her a sleepless night, and the absence of Humphrey's letter beside her bed that morning had sent a new pang to her sensitive heart.

Muriel coloured vividly as Barbara came in; and Barbara noticed this in a vague, dreamy sort of way, recalling it only too clearly later on.

"Here comes our little forlorn dove!" cried Lady Bridgeworth, tenderly. She rose and drew the girl to the fire, chafing the little hands as she did so. "Come and warm yourself, darling! Get some colour into those pretty, pale cheeks! Poor little Barbara! It is hard to bear disappointment. But it will not be for long, will it, *mignonne*?"

"You have heard from Humphrey?" Barbara said, hastily, looking across at Muriel, her heart beating fast.

"Not from Sir Humphrey—but from Mr. Lascelles. Tell Barbara what he says, *mignonne*! What a bad fire!" Josephine stooped, and stirred it into a blaze. "Your poor Humphrey is at present a wanderer, and at present a desolate creature, Barbara."

Barbara looked at Muriel still, and a curious feeling came over. She seemed to know at once that Josephine was deceiving her.

"Is—Is Humphrey ill, Muriel?" she asked, the tears starting into her eyes.

"Ill!" Josephine cried, cheerily. "What an idea!" Her sturdy voice almost drowned Muriel's feeble fencing of this question. "I see, I had better tell you all the news we have. *Mignonne*, I verily believe, imagines Ireland to be a sort of wild west, where buffaloes will eat up strange men. This is all we know, darling!" and glibly and easily Josephine told the story she had concocted. She saw that Barbara did not credit it, but that as yet the construction she desired had not come into the girl's mind. Barbara was still looking across at Muriel.

"You—you will tell me if—if he is ill?" she said, pleadingly, gently.

Muriel loathed herself even for the faint deception she was practising, and could only only forgive herself as she looked at the pale, fragile face before her, with its great wistful eyes and trembling lips. Josephine's tears communicated themselves to her; and so, for the first time in her simple, honourable life Muriel Lascelles stooped to deceive.

"You—can trust me, darling, can you not?" she said, and she smiled faintly. "I will certainly tell you—all you should know." Barbara's eyes looked into hers searchingly.

"If he is not ill I am quite content," she said. But there was a sorrowful pang at her heart; and a feeling came, whence or how she knew not, that there was drawing close to her a something the nature of which she could not define, but whose whole surroundings would darken the glorious brilliancy of the great happiness that had come to her, it might be for ever.

"Then," Josephine said, as she put down her fan that she had been holding between

the fire and her face, "then—there is no more to be said. We—understand each other?"

"Perfectly," Julian Lascelles said.

They were alone in her boudoir. There was a small dinner, and Julian was one of the guests. He had arrived half-an-hour earlier, at Lady Bridgeworth's desire.

"We must instruct Julian, or he may upset all our work, *mignonne*," she had said to Mariel. "You had better leave this to me," with a smile. "You are not a good conspirator."

"I am most unhappy," Mariel said, quietly. "I wish I had told her the truth, Josephine. Humphrey wished it; and, besides, you know, it will seem so odd if he does not write to her when she thinks him well, and then when he does write, and she finds we have deceived her—"

"She will know and understand our motive," Josephine said gently, and almost reprovingly. To herself she said, with quickening pulses, that no letter from Humphrey Lascelles should reach Barbara Vereker until she, Josephine Bridgeworth, chose to deliver it. "We must try and amuse her to-night. Lord Castleton is dining. You know he is to take her into dinner. Poor young man, I feel quite sorry for him."

"Sorry, Josephine. Why?" Mariel asked. Lady Bridgeworth snapped a bracelet on her wrist, and looked at Mariel with a curious expression.

"What a blind *mignonne* it is," she exclaimed, laughingly.

Mariel looked her inquiry out of her eyes. She was in Lady Bridgeworth's dressing-room, and stood beside the dainty table.

Josephine pinched the pretty cheek.

"Yes, blind," she repeated; "not to have seen what is so patent to everybody. The boy is hopelessly in love with our little Barbara, *mignonne*!"

"Oh! no," Mariel said, involuntarily startled, and not quite pleased.

"Oh! yes," Lady Bridgeworth said, suavely, "so much in love that were it not an established fact that Barbara is pledged to your brother I feel convinced she would receive an offer of marriage from the Earl of Castleton this very day. My dear child, don't look so amazed; there is nothing strange or wrong in this. You know Barbara is extraordinarily beautiful, and men are not blind. Naturally, she will attract tremendous admiration!"

Mariel was fidgeting the silver on the table nervously.

"I am quite sure, Josephine," she said, hurriedly, yet with a touch of cold pride in her voice, "that Barbara has not a thought of any other man in her heart, save Humphrey."

Josephine turned.

"My dear *mignonne*," she exclaimed, in tones of the most intense astonishment, "what are you thinking of? I said Lord Castleton was in love with Barbara; but I never said a word of Barbara's feelings. How could you imagine anything so extraordinary! Really dear, I am almost hurt with you. You don't misunderstand me as a rule."

"I am sorry dear," Mariel said; and then a little wistfully, "I half thought you were sneering at her when you spoke, but you must forgive me to-day. I am all out of gear. I—I am not used to telling untruths, and then I am worried about Humphrey. Dawson's telegram has made me so anxious. If I don't have better news to-morrow, do you know, I shall be almost tempted to go up to Humphrey."

"The best thing you could do. It would relieve your mind, and do him good. But wait one day," Josephine said, conningly, and then adopting a little reproachful tone, "and don't misjudge me again, darling! What is it, Baines? Mr. Lascelles in my boudoir. Tell Johnson to say I am coming immediately."

Mariel went to her room and dressed in disturbed silence. She was angry with herself, hurt with Josephine in a vague, indefinite sort

of way, troubled and wretched about Humphrey and Barbara.

"The truth is always best!" she declared, suddenly; and then a light came into her face. "Why should I not tell her the truth now it is not too late, and I shall feel so much happier. I am sure Humphrey will not be pleased when he knows we have deceived her, poor child; and, somehow, it makes me feel uncomfortable when I look at her. I seem to feel her eyes reading my heart. She is so true and straight I am sure she could not tell a lie if she tried."

Mariel hastened through her toilette, and took very little pains with it. She had spent most of her time in thinking, and it only wanted five minutes to dinner; still if she hurried she would just catch Barbara in her room, and whisper one word of explanation.

Clasping her pearl necklace round her pretty throat, Mariel ran down the passage to Barbara's room.

The door was opened, and the lights were low. The fire sent a glimmer over the room; but Barbara's white clad form was not there. Mariel could almost have cried with disappointment.

"Why did I waste so much time?" she thought to herself, as she went sorrowfully downstairs to the drawing-room. "Why did I not send and ask her to come to me? Oh! dear, I feel miserable and ashamed of myself. I must tell her all before to-night is over!"

Barbara was seated in a chair by the fire as Mariel entered the room. A good-looking young man was bending towards her, laughing and talking.

Mariel frowned a little as she saw him, and then reproached herself for so doing. She liked Lord Castleton, and she knew Barbara so well now. It was only Josephine's foolish, yet curious, speech.

"I forgot to tell her," Mariel said to herself, "that Barbara likes him because he reminds her of her brother. Poor little thing, how sad she looks! Oh, if I could tell her all now! I am sure she is troubled and perplexed. There is something she feels she cannot understand. I must—"

But whatever intention was in Mariel's mind it was ruthlessly frustrated by Josephine.

Lady Bridgeworth had seen Mariel come in, and watched her looking at Barbara. She took the girl's arm affectionately.

"Julian thinks we have done so wisely. He has been talking to her, and has managed to let her know how difficult it will be for Humphrey to write for a day or two. He is so much cleverer than we are, *mignonne*!"

Mariel was silent. What could she say now the moment was lost, and Barbara must remain in ignorance of the truth.

If Mariel could but have known how much had hung on that moment, her distress and regret would have become veritable anguish.

(To be continued)

THE BELLE OF THE SEASON.

CHAPTER XVI.

There are more things in heaven and earth,
Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.

—Hamlet.

"It is my uncle's voice!" said Geraldine. "He had fallen into a doze in the drawing-room, and I left him to visit this dear old rook. It seems that he has awakened, missed me, and discovered that I am not in the house!"

The summons was repeated.

"I must go, dear Walter," she continued. "It must be getting late, and if I am absent longer, my uncle will send some one to search for me!"

"Good-night, then, my own darling!" said

Walter, lavishing upon her the repressed tenderness of months. "We shall meet again to-morrow!"

Geraldine assented, just as the window of the mansion was hastily closed.

"My uncle is coming to search for me," she said. "I will be at this same spot to-morrow evening. I fear I cannot leave my uncle in the daytime. To-morrow evening you shall tell me, Walter, how to act towards him and what course to pursue!"

A lingering good night was said, the final embrace taken, and Geraldine quitted the spot, not venturing to look behind her.

When she had completely disappeared from his view, Walter found it hard to convince himself that he had not been dreaming, so improbable did it now look to him that he should be beloved by the Lady Geraldine Summers!

He watched the mansion in the hope of seeing some token of her presence therein, and he was not disappointed, for after several minutes, a light flashed from a chamber looking seaward, a window was opened, and she looked out.

As the maiden noticed his figure on the rock, she flattered her handkerchief in the air once or twice, and then withdrew from his sight.

"My darling will soon be wrapped in her innocent slumbers!" thought Walter, with passionate tenderness, as he waited in vain for her to reappear. "Oh! would it were to-morrow evening, that I might hear her say again she loves me!"

With a happy heart he retraced his steps towards his tent.

Walter Lorraine had traversed half the distance between the mansion of Rock Land and looked back at the edifice which contained the being more precious to him than his own soul. A curtain seemed to have been drawn across the windows, but a faint light found its way to the outside, and he concluded that the Lady Geraldine had not yet retired. Even while he gazed upon her windows the light faded, and he murmured,—

"She has retired! May she dream of me! Would that in her dream might be revealed to her something of the great love I bear her!"

Continuing his way, he soon reached his tent.

The strip of canvas that officiated as a door was waving idly to and fro in the breeze, it not having been completely buttoned. Raising it, the artist passed into the tent.

In his present happy state of mind he did not fail to notice the care and pains which Parkin had lavished upon the little apartment. The water-proof canvas that composed the floor was spread upon a springy surl, and yielded to the pressure of the foot as though it had been an Eastern carpet. The little folding bedstead was ready for his occupancy, and looked very inviting. The easel stood in one corner, and upon it hung a lighted lantern. Parkin himself lay in a blanket, deep in the enjoyment of his well-deserved slumbers.

Attractive, however, as was the little tent, Walter felt too joyous and restless for sleep, and he noiselessly made his way out of it again and seated himself upon a rock.

The glorious moonlight and the uneasy sea seemed to have new charms for him, but his gaze rested most frequently upon the grim old mansion of Rock Land.

It was outlined against the sky like some fendal keep of a warlike awe, with the waves lashing against the base of the rock, on which it stood, and seemed a strong, rough casket for the beautiful jewel it contained in the form of the Lady Geraldine.

While Walter gazed with a lover's eyes at the windows, a form crept among the rocks near him, and watched him for a few moments in silence.

"He looks good and true," whispered a broken voice, as if its owner were communing with himself. "Can I trust him?"

Slight as was the noise made by the intruder, Walter heard it and looked around him.

A moment passed, as if the stranger were

irresolute, and then he arose to his feet, passed swiftly to Walter's side, exclaiming imploringly,—

"Do not be frightened, sir. I beg you not to betray me. Have pity on me. Help me!" The artist regarded the intruder with astonishment.

As revealed by the moonlight, he was a man somewhat past middle age, with a haggard countenance, on which was set the seal of deep grief, and with a nervous and frightened manner. His hair was of a deep iron-grey and shaded a broad high brow, under which shone a pair of eyes whose chief expression was despair.

Despite his clothing, which was poor and worn, it was easy to see that he was a gentleman.

His voice showed culture and refinement as truly as it showed a state of mental torture; and Walter instantly conceived an involuntary respect and pity for him.

"How can I assist you, sir?" he responded, gently and reassuringly.

"You will assist me, then?" cried the stranger. "I am faint for want of food. Give me something to eat and drink!"

As he uttered this prayer, he sank down upon the rocks at the artist's feet.

Touched at the sad spectacle thus presented, the artist hastened to the tent, and brought back with him a basket of food and a bottle of wine, which he pressed upon the stranger.

Without waiting to thank him, the object of his kindness seized the cold meat and bread, and ate it ravenously, and drank freely of the wine.

"You are very kind, sir!" he said, as soon as he had satisfied his great hunger. "Yours are the first kind words I have heard for years!"

"Is it possible?"

"Yes, it is true. I have suffered a martyrdom. My enemies may be even now upon my track," and he sprang up and looked about him with a startled air. "Hark! Do you hear anything?"

Walter listened, and heard nothing but the waves beating against the rocks.

"No, I hear nothing," he replied. "Have no fears, sir, I will protect you!"

"Thanks, a thousand thanks for the assurance!" cried the stranger, sinking down again upon his former seat. "And yet I fear you cannot! If I should be retaken—"

He left the sentence unfinished, save by a horrible groan.

Walter was full of astonishment at the singular adventure that had befallen him, and wondered in his own mind whether the strange gentleman might not be a lunatic.

But one glance at his countenance dispelled that idea as quickly as it was formed.

"Tell me who you are, sir," he said, in his soothing tones. "Confide in me. I may be of some assistance to you. Who do you fear will retake you?"

The stranger hesitated, and glanced at the tent.

"Are we alone—quite alone?" he asked.

"Quite so. My servant is asleep in the tent, but he cannot hear a word spoken at this distance, with all the noise of the sea!"

The stranger, reassured on this point, gave Walter's face an earnest scrutiny, but, reading there only the tokens of a noble character, seemed to take courage, and said,—

"I have been wandering about among these rocks for a day or two, with no food to eat, and nothing to drink, except the stagnant water I found in pools in the rocks. I—you hear nothing?"

"Nothing—nothing whatever?"

"I have escaped from cruel enemies," continued the stranger, "enemies who have imprisoned me, and kept me in chains. Three days since I managed to break my chains and flee!"

"But why should your enemies chain and imprison you?" demanded Walter. "Surely, such things cannot be done in England!"

"The pretended that I am insane. I have

been shut up in a private insane asylum for years—many years! So many are the years that long since I ceased to count them! But all the while my enemy knew that I was as sane as he!"

Despite the wild manner of the stranger, Walter felt that he spoke truth—that he was perfectly sane!

"But who shut you up as insane?" he asked.

The stranger's face darkened, and his eyes flashed with emotion, as he responded,—

"I cannot speak his name—not yet! He has usurped my place. He has given out that I am dead or insane, but I shall yet appear to him an avenger!"

"But if you escaped three days since," questioned the artist, "why did you not hasten to confront your enemy and demand restitution and justice?"

"But I escaped in rags, and without money," replied the stranger, hopelessly. "My keepers searched for me, of course, near my enemy. It was clearly my safest course to hide until the first search was past, and then make my appearance."

Walter uttered an assent.

"Words would fail to describe to you the injuries I have received at the hands of my enemy," continued the stranger, mournfully. "Rank, wealth, an honourable name, all gone! And more than all, worse than all, my only child, my daughter, has been taught to look upon me as dead or a lunatic! Sometimes it seems as though I shall go mad!"

He pressed his hands over his eyes as if to shut out a view of his miseries.

"Do not despair!" urged Walter, affected by the sorrow of his strange guest. "Live for revenge!"

"Revenge!" repeated the injured man. "Yes; the hope of thrusting the usurper from my place, and unmasking him in all his wickedness, is all that has kept me alive during these years of captivity. Look there!"

He folded back his ragged sleeves and displayed a deep mark worn into his wrists.

"That is the mark made by the fetters I have worn for years, with but few intervals of relief from them," he said. "It was in one of those intervals I made my escape. You would not think me formidable, but wherever he is, I know that my enemy is sitting in deadly fear of my coming, for he must have heard of my escape. He dreads me more than death!"

"Then why did he not kill you?"

"Because he thought the cell of an insane asylum, with bolts, bars, chains, and fetters, and an assumed name, were an effectual grave for me. No one in England knows my story, and my keepers laugh in my face when I try to tell it to them!"

"Great Heaven!" cried Walter. "Can such wrongs be perpetrated in our happy country? Can a gentleman be confined on a charge of lunacy by an enemy who usurps his place?"

"The wrong was not all done in England," said the stranger. "It began on the Continent. Besides my enemy, there is but one man in the world who knows my wrongs, and he was an accomplice in their perpetration!"

"But tell me what happened to you on the Continent?" said the artist.

"Not yet! Ah, do you hear anything? I fear pursuit. I met several persons during my flight to the coast, and fear that I may be traced to my hiding-place."

"There is no one in the vicinity," returned Walter, "and if there were, I would defend you with my life!"

The stranger grasped the artist's hand with fervent gratitude and with grateful eyes.

"Tell me your name, sir," he said. "Tell me, that I may see you again when I shall have recovered my rights."

"My name is Walter Lorraine. I am an artist, and your friend. Command my services, sir, as you have my sympathy. If I can aid you—"

"Could you lend me sufficient money to get to London, sir?" asked his companion hesitatingly.

Walter drew out his purse from his pocket, and having removed a small portion of its contents for his own immediate use, he placed the purse, containing the remainder, in the hands of the wronged man, answering,—

"There is enough to take you to London, sir, and engage the services of one of the best lawyers to be found in the metropolis. I beg of you to be guarded in approaching your enemy. Consult a lawyer, make known to him the whole story, and offer proofs of your identity. Then proceed to overwhelm the villain who has usurped your place."

"Heaven bless you, Mr. Lorraine. Your timely help has rescued me from absolute despair. I will act upon your advice this very day."

"Does this villain claim your name and title," asked Walter, "as yourself? Does he personate you?"

"No. He claims them as the next heir. He has held my place so many years that I may find it difficult to dispossess him, but I can soon prove my identity."

"If your daughter should recognise you, it would be the strongest proof you could have. Is she still living?"

"Alas! I know not!" groaned the stranger. "If she lived she must be grown up, and entering upon womanhood. When I think of her I cannot restrain my impatience to ascertain if she is yet living, and if so, to reveal myself to her. I must hasten—"

He arose and looked about him with a wild and startled air, without waiting to finish his sentence.

"Before you go," said Walter, "you must allow me to offer you a change of clothing. Your pursuers can track you but too easily in your present suit. Come to my tent. My servant is sound asleep."

The stranger hesitated, but the offer and advice of the artist were too good to be rejected, and with many thanks he accepted them.

Walter then led the way to his tent, his companion following, with many scrutinising and suspicious glances at the neighbouring rocks, and they were soon within the little apartment.

"Sit down upon my bed, sir!" said Walter, "while I get out your clothing. How fortunate that are so nearly the same size as myself!"

The stranger smiled sadly.

Walter's form was naturally slender, although sufficiently well-developed about the chest, and it had a sufficiency of flesh; but his companion's was naturally portly, though now gaunt and shrivelled.

The artist unlocked his portmanteau, throwing out hose, linen, and every necessity of attire, and having laid these on the bed he said,—

"You can make your toilet at your leisure. My man sleeps very soundly always, and you will find it impossible to arouse him. While you dress yourself, therefore, I will go outside and watch. Should any one approach the vicinity I will warn you."

Without heeding the fearful thanks of his guest, the artist passed outside the tent, and began his self-imposed duty as sentinel.

His feelings had been deeply enlisted in favour of his guest. Although his heart was always open to pity, and relieve the miseries of others, yet there was something about the object of his present benefactions that appealed to feelings deeper than pity. Strange as the fact may seem, he had already conceived a filial tenderness towards him. Despite the man's distressed appearance there was a nobleness about his face that struck the artist as familiar, and it seemed to him as though he had somewhere seen those dark, despairing eyes before—but without their depths of gloom.

In vain he asked himself where.

He paced slowly around his tent, keeping a vigilant eye upon the rocks in front as well as the road behind, and meditating upon the singular history of his guest.

At length, as he paused in front of the tent, the flap was gently lifted, and this stranger asked,—

"Is it you, Mr. Loraine?"

Walter replied in the affirmative.

"You see no one lurking about?"

"No one. We are the only persons in the vicinity."

As this assurance reached him, the stranger emerged from the tent fully clad in the artist's extra suit of clothing. It fitted him very well, owing to his gauniness, and he would have looked quite like another man had not his wildness of manner and ghastliness of visage been too apparent. He had combed his tangled beard and long locks, and Walter felt more than ever convinced that he had not done wrong in believing every word he had uttered—so greatly improved was his personal appearance, and much more sane did he now look.

"A week ago, Mr. Loraine," he said, in a voice broken by deep emotion, "nay, an hour ago, I hated mankind on account of the bitter wrongs and injuries I had received; but you have aroused anew my faith in my species; you have given me hope and encouragement to proceed in the unmaking of the villain who has robbed me of all that life held dear. I was hungry, ragged, and penniless. You have fed me, clothed me, and given me your purse. The time may come when I can express my gratitude to you in more fitting terms; and should the occasion ever arise, I would gladly lay down my life for your happiness!"

Walter pressed his hand in silence.

The fugitive seemed overcome with his emotions, and leaning on the artist, wept freely. The tears relieved the pressure on his heart and brain, and he soon said, more calmly,—

"Pardon my weakness. These are the first tears I have shed for years. Wrong has failed to make me weep, but your kindness is so unexpected, so bounteous! I did not know that there was a man in the world who would do for a nameless fugitive what you have done for me!"

"There are very many, I trust," replied Walter. "But you are weak. Let me prevail upon you to lie down upon my bed until morning. I will watch outside. You need sleep—"

The fugitive shook his head.

"But I shall see you again, sir?" said the artist. "There is my oad. I expect to return to London within a week, and shall be glad to see you at my chambers!"

"By that time I hope to see you in my own home," responded the fugitive. "But if I am disappointed in my hopes, I will call upon you at your residence. There I will make known to you who and what I am, and all the details of my wrongs."

He glanced restlessly around him, and as he did so his gaze fell upon a single light, burning in a tower-chamber at Rock Land—a light that showed that some uneasy vigil was kept even in that stately mansion.

"Ah!" he said. "That is not a servant's chamber!"

"You know the place, then?" questioned Walter.

The fugitive's face was for a moment convulsed with emotion, and then he answered,—

"I have heard of Rock Land. Who is there?"

"Its owner, the Earl of Lindenwood!"

The countenance of the fugitive looked as if carved from stone, as he heard the reply, and he asked, hesitatingly, and in a hollow voice,—

"Is he alone?"

"No, his niece is with him—the Lady Geraldine Summers!"

The stranger uttered a cry that seemed to come from the depths of his soul.

"I—I must go," he faltered, as soon as he could speak. "Do not follow me. I shall proceed to London in the morning. Farewell!"

He wrung the artist's hands, pressed it to his lips, and then turned and sped in the direction of Rock Land.

Walter gazed after him in wonder, but soon

concluded that the fugitive had been overcome by his fears and restlessness, and preferred to hasten to his concealment amongst the rocks.

Sleepless and excited by the strange events of the night, Walter seated himself and endeavoured to calmly review the statement of his late companion.

In the midst of his musings he was startled by a piercing shriek, that rang over the rocks like the cry of a lost soul.

The next moment the cry was hushed, and he distinctly heard the sound of wheels upon the road.

He sprang to his feet, aroused by the fear that the fugitive had been captured by his pursuers; but when he reached the road no person nor carriage was in sight. Searching the rocks for some trace of his new friend, he soon discovered marks of a struggle, a tiny pool of blood, and a handkerchief he had given his strange visitor.

"They have captured him!" he cried. "They are bearing him away to his prison! Would that he had told me his name, or the place of his imprisonment! Can it be that this terrible mystery is to remain a mystery for ever?"

CHAPTER XVII.

What a state is guilt,
When everything alarms it! like a sentinel,
Who sleeps upon his watch, it wakes in dread,
Even at a breath of wind.
—Scanderberg.

LORD ROSENBERY had duly received the communication sent him by the Earl of Lindenwood, and had conceived the liveliest hopes from its contents. Knowing the Lady Geraldine to be the idol of society, he did not doubt but that a brief seduction from its charms would induce her to consent to become his bride. These hopes were further strengthened by the departure of Walter Loraine for the seaside, although, fortunately for him, he did not suspect his destination to be Rock Land.

Rosenbury had no mean idea of his personal attributes, and fancied that, in the absence of his rival, he would be irresistible. At first, he had some thought of following to Rock Land and trying the effect of his fascinations in that secluded spot; but he finally concluded that his lordship could present the case as well as himself to his obdurate niece, and that there was really no necessity for him to deprive himself of any of the enjoyments of the season, even for so brief a period.

Relying upon the assurance of the Earl that he might proceed with the preparations for his bridal, Rosenbury forgot some of his usual caution, and hastened to inform her ladyship that he was about to wed the Lady Geraldine.

"Impossible!" exclaimed Lady Rosenbury, in accents of surprise. "Are you not mistaken, Raymond? Do you not deceive yourself? Geraldine told me that she did not love you."

"Possibly she does not cherish for me a romantic affection," responded Rosenbury; "but she will, nevertheless, marry me—and that before the season is over."

"Has she given you her word to that effect?"

"Well, no," answered Rosenbury, concealing his chagrin and annoyance at the question under a mask of carelessness. "But her uncle has promised for her, and requested me to make known our engagement. I imagine that, after the engagement is once announced, the Lady Geraldine will think twice before dismissing me again."

Lady Rosenbury could not conceal her indignation at this speech.

"I am ashamed of you, Raymond," she declared, her face bearing witness to the sincerity of her words. "You must make no such announcement until Geraldine herself accepts you; and that time, I am inclined to think, will never come. If you cause any announcement to be made of a false engagement, the shame of chagrin will all fall upon yourself. Geraldine is independent enough so

state the truth, and I can bear testimony to her words."

"You don't want her to marry me," said Rosenbury, bitterly, and with an angry flush on his face. "I dare say she told you she had refused me, and you replied that she had done right!"

"You speak truly, Raymond! Lady Geraldine informed me of your proposal to her, and told me she had refused it! I think she did right in refusing her hand where she could not give her heart!"

"But if you had used your influence with her, she might have changed her mind—she loves you so much!"

"And for that very reason, Raymond, I should be very careful to say nothing to influence her. I could never take advantage of her trusting affection for me to induce her to take a step from which her own heart recoils. On the contrary, I would endeavour to set a mother's part to that motherless girl."

"And yet I dare say," remarked Raymond, "that you did not hesitate to influence her in behalf of your favourite, Walter Loraine."

Lady Rosenbury looked surprised, and asked,—

"How came you to know of Walter's love for Lady Geraldine?"

"Mrs. Loraine told me on her death-bed!"

"Ah, I see! And it was in consequence of her communication you wished to send Walter off to Palestine?"

Rosenbury assented, glad to excuse his late propositions to Walter upon that ground, in order to divert more troublesome suspicions.

"I think, Raymond," said her ladyship, gravely, "it would have been more manly to have given Walter an equal chance with yourself, instead of trying to get him out of the way!"

"But, with your influence to aid him, he is far more than a match for me!"

Lady Rosenbury looked thoughtful. During her first disappointment, after she had left Walter's studio with the Lady Geraldine, she had decided that the maiden did not love the artist, but on subsequent reflection she had remembered her blushes on his name being mentioned before the visit, and she had reversed her decision.

She now believed that Walter's affection was returned, but that Lady Geraldine's pride would for ever remain a barrier between them.

"My influence will not be needed in Walter's behalf, Raymond," she said, sadly. "If it were I would cheerfully use it, if I knew that Lady Geraldine loved him!"

"But you would not use it in my behalf, because she regards me with aversion! I believe your ladyship would dislike to greet her as a daughter-in-law!"

"You are wrong, Raymond. There is no one whom I would so gladly welcome as my daughter, but she is unfitted for you. Your tastes and hers are very different. But why not choose some one else? There are many ladies, young and handsome, to whom you might pay your addresses with reasonable hopes of success. I should very much like to see you married!"

"You will have that happiness soon, mother," responded Rosenbury, calling her ladyship by the tender title that used to come so naturally to his lips, but which to him now sounded forced and awkward. "I am determined to wed Geraldine, and I am confident that the Earl can persuade or coerce her to accept me!"

"Do I hear aright?" exclaimed Lady Rosenbury. "Would you take an unwilling bride to the altar? You are a degenerate Rosenbury, Raymond! You have in you little of the spirit of your noble ancestors, to talk of coercing a lady into a marriage with you!"

Rosenbury turned pale at this remark, and an uneasy expression flitted over his features. It seemed to him as if the fact that he was not a Rosenbury was made apparent in all his words and actions, and as if her ladyship must untimely suspect his identity.

But these thoughts were but the result of his cowardly fears and ever-present consciousness of his imposture, for not the slightest suspicion of the truth had ever entered the mind of Lord Rosenbury.

"I—I intend to devote myself to her after our marriage," he said, hesitatingly, yet with sufficient decision to show that he did not intend to change his mind upon the subject. "and I don't doubt but I can make her happy! You and my father married for love, but many do not love when they marry, and yet live very happily. I will make no announcement of an engagement yet, out of respect to your scruples, but I cannot give up Geraldine! If Walter Lorraine loves her, so do I! He has already left the field to me, having gone off somewhere on the sea coast. Her uncle approves the match, and I am inclined to think that he will make her see it in the same light as himself!"

Lady Rosenbury sighed. She felt it would be vain to argue with Raymond, or try to induce him to yield all pretensions to the hand of Lady Geraldine. She saw that his cold, selfish heart had been aroused to a degree of passion of which she had not deemed him capable, and this passion was, unfortunately, all lavished upon a being who could not return it.

"I can make no more efforts to dissuade you from your course, Raymond," she said, in a disappointed tone. "I can only hope that the honourable principles and keen sense of justice that characterised the late Lord Rosenbury may have been inherited, even in some slight degree, by his son. The teachings I have lavished upon you seem to have been thrown away, and leave you to your sense of what is right!"

Rosenbury bit his lips.

It was no part of his programme to alienate from himself what little affection her ladyship might continue to cherish for him, and he felt sorry that any cause of disagreement had arisen between them. While, therefore, he would not give up his plans concerning Geraldine, he yet endeavoured to enlist Lady Rosenbury's sympathies in his favour.

In the midst of his vain efforts, a rap was heard at the door of the apartment, and Tooks, Rosenbury's valet, entered, bearing a card upon a salver.

"A person to see your lordship," he said, in a tone which showed that he entertained no high degree of the person he announced. "He seems to be intoxicated, your lordship, but it was impossible to get rid of him. He says he must see your lordship on important business!"

"An intoxicated fellow asking for me?" exclaimed Rosenbury. "Send him away, Tooks. I have no business with intoxicated fellows. Is he a gentleman?"

"No, your lordship, only a low fellow!"

"Turn him away then, Tooks. You should know better than to come to me about any such fellow!"

"But, your lordship," said the valet, who despite his contempt for the visitor had received from him a handsome fee for admitting and announcing him, "he says your lordship will regret not having seen him if he goes away, and he begs you just to look at his card!"

As he spoke, Tooks advanced the salver, on which rested a dirty piece of pasteboard, with a name inscribed upon it in a straggling handwriting.

Rosenbury involuntarily glanced at the card, and the room seemed to reel around him. "Colts Lorraine!" he said aloud, unconscious that he spoke. "Colts Lorraine! Who is he?"

"He is the husband of your old nurse," replied Lady Rosenbury, wondering at Raymond's strange emotion.

"But he is dead. He—he died in Australia!"

"It was but a false report," returned her ladyship. "He owned a letter to be written home to that effect, as Walter wrote me the other day!"

"Not dead?" ejaculated Rosenbury. "Not

dead!" Lady Rosenbury repeated her explanation.

"Go to him, Tooks," commanded Rosenbury, as soon as he could command his thoughts. "Show him into the drawing room, and say that I will be with him directly!"

Tooks bowed and withdrew to execute the command, too discreet to show any surprise at its singularity.

"This—this is very strange!" stammered Rosenbury, "I supposed he died years ago. Mrs. Lorraine told me so!"

"She believed so, Raymond. Walter wrote me a long letter the evening before his departure from London, in which he stated the particulars of his father's history in Australia. I saw Lorraine at Walter's studio, and knew him at once."

"And why did you not tell me?" interrupted Rosenbury. "Why did you not tell me he had returned?"

"You forget yourself, Raymond," said Mrs. Lorraine gently. "I could not suppose that the subject would have any interest for you!"

Rosenbury was alarmed at the interest he had already betrayed in Lorraine, and hastened to say, with ill-assumed carelessness,—

"It's of no consequence, mother. I was interested in him on Walter's account—that's all! I suppose I must go down and see the fellow!"

"Perhaps I had better accompany you," remarked her ladyship. "He may have come hither on Walter's account—possibly with a message!"

"I wouldn't have you see the fellow for the world, mother!" cried Rosenbury, quite alarmed. "Tooks says he is intoxicated. I will bring you any message he may have for you!"

Rather pleased at the solicitude thus expressed for her, Lady Rosenbury acquiesced in Raymond's decision, and he left the room alone to seek his visitor.

It would be impossible to describe the shock he had received on learning that Colts Lorraine was alive and under his very roof!

Pale and trembling he hastened to the drawing-room, with his thoughts in a tumult, and with but one desire—that of ridding himself of his dangerous visitor!

Opening the door with a noiseless movement, he advanced into the apartment, and found his visitor engaged in earnest contemplation of the articles of vertu and unconscious of his entrance.

He seized the opportunity of regarding Lorraine before betraying himself, in order to gain some idea of the best manner of dealing with him.

Lorraine had fitted himself up, from his wife's legacy, in a manner which he conceived appropriate for a visit to Lord Rosenbury. A dress suit adorned his person, and his great hands were encased in white kids, outside of which were ostentatiously displayed several immense rings. A pair of tightly-fitting pumps encased his feet, and his head was ornamented with a new hat which set jauntily on the back of his head and a little at one side, after his characteristic fashion.

Having thus attired himself, he imagined that he was the "the glass of fashion," and would have been highly indignant at the assertion of the astute Tooks that he was no gentleman—had he heard it.

In order to fortify himself for the proposed interview with Rosenbury, he had had recourse to his favourite stimulants, and his mind was in its usual hazy condition, as he stood, with one eye closed, surveying the ornaments of the drawing-room.

Little used as was Rosenbury to the study of human nature, he saw that he had nothing at present to fear from the person before him, and he conceived a hope that he might be able to manage him.

"You wished to see me, Mr. Lorraine?" he said, after a protracted survey.

Lorraine turned around abruptly, made an effort to apply a gold-framed eye glass to his

visual organ, but, falling in that, ejaculated,—

"Is this Lud Rosenbury?"

Rosenbury bowed.

"Glad see you, m' lud. Hope well. I'm Colts Lorraine, service!"

With this announcement, Lorraine held out his hand and grasped the reluctant hand of his host with a vicelike earnestness.

"You're Lud Rosenbury, he, he?" continued the visitor. "Good joke, eh? He, he!"

He thrust out a finger at Rosenbury, and laughed immoderately, still clinging to his hand.

Rosenbury looked around nervously, and replied,—

"Pray, do not speak so loud, Mr. Lorraine! You have something to say to me, have you not?"

Lorraine seemed to feel some astonishment at this style of address, and said,—

"I say. Old woman's dead, eh?"

"If you mean Mrs. Lorraine, she is!"

"Thought so. 'Mrs. Lorraine,' eh? Good joke! You's with her last moments?"

"I was!"

"Thought so. Made revelation, un'stand. Is't true?"

Rosenbury bowed, with a keen sense of humiliation as he did so. He did not even like to own to this man, his father, who had placed him in his present position, that it was not his rightfully.

"Then we un'stand each other," said Lorraine, familiarly. "Got good deal say to you. Is is ship at home?"

"She is not!" returned Rosenbury, fearing his visitor would next demand to see Lady Rosenbury.

"So much better. Can't listen!"

Despite his annoyance and anxiety, Rosenbury could not suppress a smile at the preposterous ideas of Lady Rosenbury playing cavedrepper.

"You need have no fears, Mr. Lorraine," he observed coldly. "We shall not be interrupted. Proceed with your communication!"

"Mr. Lorraine," repeated the visitor, evidently greatly amused at his host's dignified coldness. "He, he! Call that good joke!"

"If you have anything to say to me, please say it," said Rosenbury, somewhat impatiently.

Lorraine's eyes twinkled, and he winked at hosts familiarly, as he replied,—

"Sense me, Raymon. Know your patience. Felt so 'self. Day so hot—feel overcome heat. Mus' take nap. Shan't be long!"

As he began to loosen his necktie Rosenbury said, hastily,—

"You can't take a nap here. If you have anything to say to me, say it. Or go somewhere else and sleep off your drunkenness. I can't have you here!"

"But you mus'," returned Lorraine, doggedly. "Talk you pretty soon. Jes' now too sleepy!"

Retreating to a sofa, the unwelcome visitor threw himself upon it, drew a handkerchief over his face, and composed himself for a nap.

Rosenbury stood the picture of stupefaction, and gazed upon him.

"What if Lady Rosenbury should come into the room?" he asked himself. "What if a servant even were to make an appearance while Lorraine lay there in his drunken slumbers?"

And yet he dared not summon a servant and have the fellow thrust out.

CHAPTER XVIII.

I'll keep this secret from the world,
As warily as those that deal in poison
Keep poison from their children.

—Webster.

ALMOST choking with rage and mortification at the ridiculous position in which he found himself, as the guardian of Lorraine's drunken slumbers, Rosenbury stared at his visitor in

do not, could not love him as I love Humphre. They are so different."

Barbara's lovely eyes met the speaker's, and a look of absolute sympathy passed between them.

Lady Bridgeworth laughed shortly.

"We must all agree as to Sir Humphrey's perfections, and you are to be envied with such a brother, *mignonne*. Nevertheless, do you know I was charmed with Mr. Lascelles? He is very handsome!"

"Not handsomer than Humphre!"

"And so clever!"

"Not so clever as Humphre!"

Josephine laughed.

"You dear, sweet, loyal little thing! Well now, you will not allow Julian anything."

"Yes, indeed," Muriel said, hastily. "He is clever and so fascinating. I always say Julian could charm a snake off a tree, but—" Muriel stopped with a sigh.

"But he isn't Humphre," Barbara finished very softly. Then she looked across at Josephine. "But what is the invitation?"

"Tea and music in his studio. I have heard so much of Julian Lascelles' studio. I am told he has some tapestry and armour and other curios which are almost priceless."

Muriel bit her lip. She knew only too well at what price all Julian's eccentricities and extravagances had been purchased.

"I have not yet seen them," was all she said; but her sense of justice rose again for the selfish, handsome, idle young man who gave Humphre so many anxious days, and had reduced the old home and property to such terrible small proportions through his follies.

"Your future brother is disposed to fall in love with you, Barbara," Lady Bridgeworth went on. "He simply raved about your photographs. The proofs arrived just as he was here, and we took the liberty of opening them. You don't mind, dear?"

"Oh, no!" Barbara said, hurriedly, but she did mind, for she had wanted Humphre to be the first to see and choose his favourite from among the photographs which had been taken at his express desire.

"I am afraid Julian will make you very vain, Babes," Muriel said, as lightly as she could; but the truth was she was by no means pleased at Julian's sudden visit, and wished, in a vague sort of way, that this proposed afternoon in his studio could be prevented.

She felt, too, in the same vague way, that Lady Bridgeworth was as much determined to go as she was disinclined. Barbara's sensitive nature divined that there was a jarring note somewhere, yet could not quite realise where it came from, or why it was there.

She looked across at Muriel as she spoke.

"Humphre would like us to go?" she asked, hurriedly.

Lady Bridgeworth answered laughingly.

"We have Sir Humphre's most emphatic consent. Muriel telegraphed off at once, sage little person, and she has his answer in her pocket. Show it to Barbara, *mignonne*!"

"I thought it was the best thing to do," Muriel said, making her explanation to Barbara with her eyes as well as her words.

"For well you know, both of you, that things have not been very very pleasant between Humphre and Julian, and I thought Humphre's wishes should be consulted."

Barbara read her lover's telegram.

"Certainly accept invitation. I am glad for you both to go. Tell my darling to enjoy herself."

The girl blushed at the last words, and her heart thrilled. How good, how sweet, how true he was!

"So now you see you can make up your mind to a most charming afternoon. You are fond of music and pictures, Barbara, so you will be in your element."

Josephine appeared to be in a most delightful humour. She always looked her best in the winter time. Pure and velvety suited her hard, yet almost regal cast of face; and she had never looked handsomer than when they drove off in the afternoon to the house in

Mayfair, which Julian Lascelles had made renowned for the unique entertainment he provided for society, and the marvellous and beautiful things he had gathered together about him.

She was full of laughter and bright chat this afternoon; and her tact was such that she infected both her companions with her humour, and brushed away any constraint that might have existed.

Julian was at the door to receive them himself. He greeted Barbara with warmth, and could scarcely conceal the surprise and admiration he felt at sight of his brother's affianced wife.

As to Barbara, she imagined herself in fairyland. She had never conceived anything more exquisite than this house in her dreams or imaginations. All was perfect, and the host who was so like, yet so unlike, Humphre, seemed to fit in with it all in the same perfect way.

Julian Lascelles was, in truth, a far more handsome man than his brother. He had scarcely a flaw in his face, the features were so regular, the eyes dreamy and beautiful, the expression full of charm. He was, however, Sir Humphre's inferior in height, and had altogether a slender and almost an effeminate air. Still he was undeniably handsome, and Muriel spoke rightly when she said he had fascinations too.

He had managed to dispel the shadow from her face by the time he had ushered them into the studio; and Barbara found herself wondering, in a vague sort of way, how it could be possible that there could have been any quarrel between this man and Humphre.

She wandered round the room, looking at all the artistic and curious things herself, as Julian Lascelles said to Lady Bridgeworth, who received the words with a forced smile.

"The most beautiful thing there!"

Before ten minutes had gone, Julian's surprise at this girl's beauty had become tinged with the envy and jealousy that clouded his every thought of his elder and more fortunate brother.

Muriel's almost cold, nervous manner with him had always been a grievance, though he had never tried in the smallest way to win his sister's love; and now Barbara's absolute indifference to his handsome face and eloquent eyes, and her undoubted devotion to Humphre, seen as easily by the ready blush and tender smile whenever her lover's name was mentioned, was something more than annoying to him.

He devoted himself to Lady Bridgeworth, whose ready admiration for him was exceedingly pleasant to him.

Josephine guessed the drift of his thoughts, and though she saw in this a probable and very strong assistance to her plans, she did not intend to avail herself of it immediately.

"You must get Sir Humphre to let you sit to Mr. Lascelles. I am sure he would make a charming picture!" she said to Barbara after tea had been brought in and served by Julian's Indian servant—a strange, silent, picturesque man, in his many-coloured garments.

Barbara blushed, and then smiled.

"I am sure Humphre will be very glad," she said, slowly, her young heart immediately conceiving the sweet hope that she might some day be the means of healing the sore between the two brothers.

Julian answered her smile readily.

"I should like to paint you all!" he said, glancing round at the three faces. "Lady Bridgeworth, you must promise to sit to me. I have never painted you yet, Muriel, only that little sketch which I did from memory," he pointed to a canvas on the wall. "I am afraid it is not very like you, dear little sis!"

Muriel rose and went across to it, and he stood leaning one hand on her shoulder. The girl was touched at this small evidence of remembrance in the brother whom she had almost taught herself to believe had not even a grain of affection for her.

"I think it is more than like," she said, in her pretty, gentle way; then colouring a little more, and putting her hand into his, "dear Julian, I am so glad you like to have me here."

Julian accepted his sister's affection with charming warmth; his vanity was gratified, but his heart was not touched. Muriel and Barbara, arm linked in arm, went wandering round the studio while Julian seated himself at the piano, and played in a soft, half-tone sort of way to Josephine, who was attracted by this man, and yet who felt a great contempt for him rising in her breast. He was too much akin to her own nature to win any other feeling. The faint resemblance in him to Humphre only served to whet the keenness of her desire to make her longing for Barbara's lover grow more definite and absolute. The very difference of Humphre's nature from her own made him more desirable to her.

She was a curious mixture, poor, proud, selfish, reckless Josephine Bridgeworth; for, with all her yearnings for and respect of what was good, noble, honourable, true, she made no effort, seemed to have no desire to tune her own character into harmony. Just as she fathomed and understood Julian Lascelles, so in her turn was she fathomed and understood by him. He read beneath her civility, he saw her hatred glittering behind her mask of affection. For Barbara he felt that he need not indulge in much envy of his brother's good fortune, for it was more than probable that good fortune would miscarry, aided by the tactics of this handsome woman of the world, with her ready wit and brilliant conversation.

He sank his voice into a confidential whisper as the two girls wandered away into the odd nooks and corners.

"She is a dainty, little creature!" he said, as his fingers wandered over the keys. Julian dabbled in several branches of art, succeeding in all in a sort of spurious fashion, yet having no real knowledge, heart or perception for that which he attempted.

Josephine smiled her cold smile.

"She is distinctly beautiful!" she answered, as she unlocked her sealskin, and flung it off her shapely shoulders.

Julian assented.

"Yet it is to me strange," he said, in a musing sort of way, "that Humphre should have chosen such a wife, a shy schoolgirl, with nothing but a lovely face as credentials. He has always preached the gospel of family pride to me. Surely he is making some inquiries about her, Lady Bridgeworth? After all—you will forgive the pessimism of the remark—a woman's face, however lovely and ingenious, is not the strongest credential in the world."

"Sir Humphre will listen to neither your pessimism or my worldly wisdom," Josephine said, lightly smoothing the back of her well-fitting glove as she spoke.

Julian looked at her through his half-closed eyes. He felt that there was something more than an ordinary woman's jealousy at work in this matter.

"Have you spoken to him?" he asked, gently.

She shrank back.

"Oh, no, not I!" laughing slightly.

"I have saved myself much useless trouble. One can never reason with a madman, Mr. Lascelles."

"True!" Julian said, playing on in a dreamy fashion—he kept his eyes fixed on the keys. The spirit of malignant mischief was latent in this man. His old impatience and jealous dislike for his brother, his annoyance at Barbara's absolute indifference, all assisted the mischief to ripen.

He laughed softly to himself.

"I suppose, poor old chap, he is very much gone?" he said, just turning to Josephine.

He saw the effort she had to put on herself. The sudden blush, and then paling in her face,

the stiffening of her lips, answered far better than her words.

"He is undoubtedly very much infatuated," "It is a serious thing," Julian said to himself.

"Humphrey has never been a flirt, and he is just one of those humpy individuals who, when they do fall in love, fall for their lifetime. Really, I think it behoves me as his brother," a smile curling the lip beneath his moustache, "to do my best to prevent him making a fool of himself. You have been so kind and attentive in looking after me, old chap, the least I can do is to return the compliment. If you must have a wife, why, I think I know the very woman to suit you."

He was talking so slowly, while he thought all this, discussing Barbara and her possible origin and parentage.

"She never speaks of her family? Strange! Also, you say Humphrey refuses to make any sort of inquiries until after the marriage? That seems to me," Julian said, with that strange smile of his, something after the fashion of looking the door when the horse has been stolen; however, we must make all sorts of excuses for love's young dream. Vereker, Vereker," he went on, in a musing sort of way, "the name is good, but is probably assumed. I ran against a young fellow about a year ago called Cyril Vereker, as bad a scamp as one could wish to meet he was!"

"And is Barbara's brother?" Josephine said, hurriedly. She rose and drew her cloak about her. "I think we must be taking our departure, Mr. Lascelles; we have given you quite a visitation. It is already nearly six o'clock, and we are going to the theatre."

Julian rose at once.

"So late! How time flies! We must find my two sisters. I suppose they are deep in mutual confidences about their beloved Humphie."

Josephine smiled, and let him adjust her cloak.

"You must come and see me," she said.

Julian, of course, declared it would be his pleasure to call on Lady Bridgeworth every day if she would permit him.

"We must be friends," he said, in his most charming way; and to himself he said, "So the plot thickens. My lady has her secret, and a double reason for wishing this girl ill. I must think this over!"

The result of his cogitations was satisfactory.

"The marriage must be prevented," he said to himself, as he dressed for dinner. "At first I only saw a chance of giving my d—d prig of a brother something to think about, and so pay him out for all his meddling, prating interference; but now—now, Julian, my boy, there is a very different reason. The future will be decidedly satisfactorily for you, Ianey, when Lady Bridgeworth becomes your sister-in-law, and is very much under your power. I must take a little trouble about her ladyship. I have got a good clue, and can pretty well guess the end. With Lady Bridgeworth's income at my disposal," Julian said, as he surveyed his handsome face with sincere complacency, "life will be really worth living, even in this beastly climate!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

The fortnight of Humphrey's absence was just at an end, and the trousseau was nearly all ready. Barbara had written a sweet little letter every day down to Torchester Rectory, detailing the events of the shopping, and telling Mrs. Griffiths all the interesting news she could gather.

She never repeated her thanks in these letters. She felt that Owen and his mother knew how deep, how true, how indescribable her gratitude to them was, and she felt, moreover, that they were better pleased by her silence.

Mrs. Griffiths was charmed by these letters. They were almost a revelation to her, evincing

such much broader thoughts and touches of mental power than she had credited the gentle young creature with.

"The girl has a fine character. She will be a noble woman!" she said to her son, after she had given him one of these letters to read. "I am so glad, Owen, for I confess sometimes I have been a little fearful for her future. Now I see that should her beauty go as her youth must one day, she will have other attractions to bind her husband to her, and to fit her for the great position Heaven has given her."

Owen read the letter carefully.

"I don't think I am so surprised as you, dear mother," he said. "I felt there was something stronger in little Barbara than one could read on the surface. Poor child, it is a pleasure, nay, a happiness, to me that she has drifted into such a haven. How strange life is, and what a merciful, generous Power we have above us! This child's path, that was so crooked, is now so clear and beautiful. It is a great pleasure also to me, mother," Owen Griffiths added, "to find I was mistaken in Lady Bridgeworth's nature."

Mrs. Griffiths was silent. Not even to her son, from whom she had no secrets, would she put into words the vague sort of uneasiness that always clung about Josephine and her attitude to Barbara.

Mrs. Griffiths found it a hard, almost impossible, task to associate this snave, generous, warm, affectionate woman with the one who had stood before her that summer morning, and spoken such bitter, insolent words, and all because of little Barbara.

"Heaven forgive me if I am wrong!" the gentle lady said to herself; "but I doubt—I fear sometimes. It is not clear to me."

She wrote back to Barbara every day, and often to Muriel, whom she had grown to love.

"The child is going to be a peacemaker!" she said, when one day a letter came, full of Julian and his doings; and the thought was pleasant to them both, for Muriel had spoken so often of the sorrow this brother had caused herself and Sir Humphrey.

On the very day Humphrey was to have arrived in town Barbara experienced an almost terrible disappointment. A telegram arrived in his stead. It was very curt, as telegrams usually are, and said that his return must unfortunately be delayed for a few more days, to his great regret.

Muriel was astonished and alarmed at this move, and her fears were proved to be well founded when the next morning post brought her a letter from Humphrey, evidently scribbled while in pain, saying he had a slight accident, and must lie perfectly still for a week or a fortnight.

"Don't frighten Barbara," he wrote. "It's a mere nothing, baby, and I shall be as right as possible with a few days' rest. Break it to her gently. Shan't be able to write easily to her or you, I am so dreadfully disappointed. I could almost forget I am a man, and indulge in a good cry. Kiss my darling, and take care of her, Muriel. I am so pleased about Julian."

Muriel's first thought had been to tell Barbara this news as gently as possible; but, as luck would have it, she determined to go to Josephine first.

"Don't dream of telling her, at least not for a day or so," Lady Bridgeworth said, hurriedly and firmly. "You know what a nervous little thing she is. We shall have her seriously ill if we tell her Humphrey is in bed, and cannot move. I assure you I consider the girl to be so delicately organised, I should dread the consequences."

"But," Muriel looked troubled and sad, "I must tell her something, Josephine. You see, Humphie says he can't write, I am awfully afraid he must be dreadfully bruised and shaken. I shall telegraph to Dawson, that's the agent, you know, and tell him to let me know everything. But what shall I say to Barbara?"

Josephine was silent a moment. Her heart was beating quickly. Fate had smiled at the very moment! Could anything be more

fortunate? At all hazards, she must keep Barbara in ignorance of the truth of Sir Humphrey's silence and absence, and once this was accomplished, she must not more definitely.

"The best thing you can do," she said, quietly, and as though she were really considering poor Barbara to the very best in her power, "is to say you have heard from Sir Humphrey, that he is compelled to go to Ireland about that property he spoke of the other day. He will be unable to write at all—most probably for a week, and he has asked you to tell Barbara this as gently as possible."

Muriel's pretty face was shadowed. She hated lying and deceiving, and had never done such a thing in her life before.

"I—I don't think I can do—" she commenced, hurriedly, and then ceased, for at that moment Barbara came in.

The girl was looking very fragile. The disappointment of the day before had given her a sleepless night, and the absence of Humphrey's letter beside her bed that morning had sent a new pang to her sensitive heart.

Muriel coloured vividly as Barbara came in; and Barbara noticed this in a vague, dreamy sort of way, recalling it only too clearly later on.

"Here comes our little forlorn dove!" cried Lady Bridgeworth, tenderly. She rose and drew the girl to the fire, chafing the little hands as she did so. "Come and warm yourself, darling! Get some colour into those pretty, pale cheeks! Poor little Barbara! It is hard to bear disappointment. But it will not be for long, will it, *mignonne*?"

"You have heard from Humphie?" Barbara said, hastily, looking across at Muriel, her heart beating fast.

"Not from Sir Humphrey—but from Mrs. Lascelles. Tell Barbara what he says, *mignonne*! What a bad fire!" Josephine stooped, and stirred it into a blaze. "Your poor Humphie is at present a wanderer, and at present a desolate creature, Barbara."

Barbara looked at Muriel still, and a curious feeling came over. She seemed to know at once that Josephine was deceiving her.

"Is—is Humphie ill, Muriel?" she asked, the tears starting into her eyes.

"Ill! Josephine cried, cheerily. "What an idea!" Her sturdy voice almost drowned Muriel's feeble fencing of this question. "I see, I had better tell you all the news we have. *Mignonne*, I verily believe, imagines Ireland to be a sort of wild west, where buffaloes will eat up strange men. This is all we know, darling!" and glibly and easily, Josephine told the story she had concocted. She saw that Barbara did not credit it, but that as yet the construction she desired had not come into the girl's mind. Barbara was still looking across at Muriel.

"You—you will tell me it—if he is ill?" she said, pleadingly, gently.

Muriel loathed herself, even for the faint deception she was practising, and could only, only forgive herself as she looked at the pale, fragile face before her, with its great wistful eyes and trembling lips. Josephine's fears communicated themselves to her; and so, for the first time in her simple, honourable life, Muriel Lascelles stooped to deceive.

"You—can trust me, darling, can you not?" she said, and she smiled faintly. "I will certainly tell you—all you should know."

Barbara's eyes looked into hers searchingly. "If he is not ill I am quite content," she said.

But there was a sorrowful pang at her heart; and a feeling came, whence or how she knew not, that there was drawing close to her a something the nature of which she could not define, but whose whole surroundings would darken the glorious brilliancy of the great happiness that had come to her, it might be for ever.

"Then," Josephine said, as she put down her fan that she had been holding between

the fire and her face, "then—there is no more to be said. We—understand each other?"

"Perfectly," Julian Lascelles said.

They were alone in her boudoir. There was a small dinner, and Julian was one of the guests. He had arrived half-an-hour earlier, at Lady Bridgeworth's desire.

"We must instruct Julian, or he may upset all our work, *mignonne*," she had said to Muriel. "You had better leave this to me," with a smile. "You are not a good conspirator."

"I am most unhappy," Muriel said, quietly. "I wish I had told her the truth, Josephine. Humphrey wished it; and, besides, you know, it will seem so odd if he does not write to her when she thinks him well, and then when he does write, and she finds we have deceived her—"

"She will know and understand our motive," Josephine said gently, and almost reprovingly. To herself she said, with quickening pulses, that no letter from Humphrey Lascelles should reach Barbara Vereker until she, Josephine Bridgeworth, chose to deliver it. "We must try and amuse her to-night. Lord Castleton is dining. You know he is to take her into dinner. Poor young man, I feel quite sorry for him."

"Sorry, Josephine. Why?" Muriel asked. Lady Bridgeworth snapped a bracelet on her wrist, and looked at Muriel with a curious expression.

"What a blind *mignonne* it is," she exclaimed, laughingly.

Muriel looked her inquiry out of her eyes. She was in Lady Bridgeworth's dressing-room, and stood beside the dainty table.

Josephine pinched the pretty cheek. "Yes, blind," she repeated; "not to have seen what is so patent to everybody. The boy is hopelessly in love with our little Barbara, *mignonne*!"

"Oh! no," Muriel said, involuntarily startled, and not quite pleased.

"Oh! yes," Lady Bridgeworth said, suavely, "so much in love that were it not an established fact that Barbara is pledged to your brother I feel convinced she would receive an offer of marriage from the Earl of Castleton this very day. My dear child, don't look so amazed; there is nothing strange or wrong in this. You know Barbara is extraordinarily beautiful, and men are not blind. Naturally, she will attract tremendous admiration!"

Muriel was fidgeting the silver on the table nervously.

"I am quite sure, Josephine," she said, hurriedly, yet with a touch of cold pride in her voice, "that Barbara has not a thought of any other man in her heart, save Humphrey." Josephine turned.

"My dear *mignonne*," she exclaimed, in tones of the most intense astonishment, "what are you thinking of? I said Lord Castleton was in love with Barbara; but I never said a word of Barbara's feelings. How could you imagine anything so extraordinary! Really dear, I am almost hurt with you. You don't misunderstand me as a rule."

"I am sorry dear," Muriel said; and then a little wistfully, "I half thought you were sneering at her when you spoke, but you must forgive me to-day. I am all out of gear. I—I am not used to telling untruths, and then I am worried about Humphrey. Dawson's telegram has made me so anxious. If I don't have better news to-morrow, do you know, I shall be almost tempted to go up to Humphrey."

"The best thing you could do. It would relieve your mind, and do him good. But wait one day," Josephine said, cunningly, and then adopting a little reproachful tone, "and don't misjudge me again, darling! What is it, Baines? Mr. Lascelles in my boudoir. Tell Johnson to say I am coming immediately."

Muriel went to her room and dressed in disturbed silence. She was angry with herself, hurt with Josephine in a vague, indefinite sort

of way, troubled and wretched about Humphrey and Barbara.

"The truth is always best!" she declared, suddenly; and then a light came into her face. "Why should I not tell her the truth now it is not too late, and I shall feel so much happier. I am sure Humphrey will not be pleased when he knows we have deceived her, poor child; and, somehow, it makes me feel uncomfortable when I look at her. I seem to feel her eyes reading my heart. She is so true and straight I am sure she could not tell a lie if she tried."

Muriel hastened through her toilette, and took very little pains with it. She had spent most of her time in thinking, and it only wanted five minutes to dinner; still if she hurried she would just catch Barbara in her room, and whisper one word of explanation.

Clasping her pearl necklace round her pretty throat, Muriel ran down the passage to Barbara's room.

The door was opened, and the lights were low. The fire sent a glimmer over the room; but Barbara's white clad form was not there. Muriel could almost have cried with disappointment.

"Why did I waste so much time?" she thought to herself, as she went sorrowfully downstairs to the drawing-room. "Why did I not send and ask her to come to me? Oh! dear, I feel miserable and ashamed of myself. I must tell her all before to-night is over!"

Barbara was seated in a chair by the fire as Muriel entered the room. A good-looking young man was bending towards her, laughing and talking.

Muriel frowned a little as she saw him, and then reproached herself for so doing. She liked Lord Castleton, and she knew Barbara so well now. It was only Josephine's foolish, yet curious, speech.

"I forgot to tell her," Muriel said to herself, "that Barbara likes him because he reminds her of her brother. Poor little thing, how sad she looks! Oh, if I could tell her all now! I am sure she is troubled and perplexed. There is something she feels she cannot understand. I must—"

But whatever intention was in Muriel's mind it was ruthlessly frustrated by Josephine.

Lady Bridgeworth had seen Muriel come in, and watched her looking at Barbara. She took the girl's arm affectionately.

"Julian thinks we have done so wisely. He has been talking to her, and has managed to let her know how difficult it will be for Humphrey to write for a day or two. He is so much cleverer than we are, *mignonne*!"

Muriel was silent. What could she say now the moment was lost, and Barbara must remain in ignorance of the truth.

If Muriel could but have known how much had hung on that moment, her distress and regret would have become veritable anguish.

(To be continued)

THE BELLE OF THE SEASON.

CHAPTER XVI.

There are more things in heaven and earth,
Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.

—Hamlet.

"It is my uncle's voice!" said Geraldine. "He had fallen into a doze in the drawing-room, and I left him to visit this dear old rock. It seems that he has awakened, missed me, and discovered that I am not in the house!"

The summons was repeated.

"I must go, dear Walter," she continued. "It must be getting late, and if I am absent longer, my uncle will send some one to search for me!"

"Good-night, then, my own darling!" said

Walter, lavishing upon her the repressed tenderness of months. "We shall meet again to-morrow!"

Geraldine assented, just as the window of the mansion was hastily closed.

"My uncle is coming to search for me," she said. "I will be at this same spot to-morrow evening. I fear I cannot leave my uncle in the daytime. To-morrow evening you shall tell me, Walter, how to act towards him and what course to pursue!"

A lingering good night was said, the final embrace taken, and Geraldine quitted the spot, not venturing to look behind her.

When she had completely disappeared from his view, Walter found it hard to convince himself that he had not been dreaming, so improbable did it now look to him that he should be beloved by the Lady Geraldine Summers!

He watched the mansion in the hope of seeing some token of her presence therein, and he was not disappointed, for after several minutes, a light flashed from a chamber looking seaward, a window was opened, and she looked out.

As the maiden noticed his figure on the rock; she fluttered her handkerchief in the air once or twice, and then withdrew from his sight.

"My darling will soon be wrapped in her innocent slumbers!" thought Walter, with passionate tenderness, as he waited in vain for her to reappear. "Oh! would it were to-morrow evening, that I might hear her say again she loves me!"

With a happy heart he retraced his steps towards his tent.

Walter Loraine had traversed half the distance between the mansion of Rock Land and looked back at the edifice which contained the being more precious to him than his own soul. A curtain seemed to have been drawn across the windows, but a faint light found its way to the outside, and he concluded that the Lady Geraldine had not yet retired. Even while he gazed upon her windows the light faded, and he murmured,—

"She has retired! May she dream of me! Would that in her dream might be revealed to her something of the great love I bear her!"

Continuing his way, he soon reached his tent.

The strip of canvas that officiated as a door was waving idly to and fro in the breeze, it not having been completely battened. Raising it, the artist passed into the tent.

In his present happy state of mind he did not fail to notice the care and pains which Parkin had lavished upon the little apartment. The water-proof canvas that composed the floor was spread upon a springy turf, and yielded to the pressure of the foot as though it had been an Eastern carpet. The little folding bedstead was ready for his occupancy, and looked very inviting. The easel stood in one corner, and upon it hung a lighted lantern. Parkin himself lay in a blanket, deep in the enjoyment of his well deserved slumbers.

Attractive, however, as was the little tent, Walter felt too joyous and restless for sleep, and he noiselessly made his way out of it again and seated himself upon a rock.

The glorious moonlight and the uneasy sea seemed to have new charms for him, but his gaze rested most frequently upon the grim old mansion of Rock Land.

It was outlined against the sky like some feudal keep of a warlike awe, with the waves lashing against the base of the rock, on which it stood, and seemed a strong, rough casket for the beautiful jewel it contained in the form of the Lady Geraldine.

While Walter gazed with a lover's eyes at the windows, a form crept among the rocks near him, and watched him for a few moments in silence.

"He looks good and true," whispered a broken voice, as if its owner were communing with himself. "Can I trust him?"

Slight as was the noise made by the intruder, Walter heard it and looked around him.

A moment passed, as if the stranger were

irresolute, and then he arose to his feet, passed swiftly to Walter's side, exclaiming imploringly,—

"Do not be frightened, sir. I beg you not to betray me. Have pity on me. Help me!" The artist regarded the intruder with astonishment.

As revealed by the moonlight, he was a man somewhat past middle age, with a haggard countenance, on which was set the seal of deep grief, and with a nervous and frightened manner. His hair was of a deep iron-grey and shaded a broad high brow, under which shone a pair of eyes whose chief expression was despair.

Despite his clothing, which was poor and worn, it was easy to see that he was a gentleman.

His voice showed culture and refinement as truly as it showed a state of mental torture; and Walter instantly conceived an involuntary respect and pity for him.

"How can I assist you, sir?" he responded, gently and reassuringly.

"You will assist me, then?" cried the stranger. "I am faint for want of food. Give me something to eat and drink!"

As he uttered this prayer, he sank down upon the rocks at the artist's feet.

Touched at the sad spectacle thus presented, the artist hastened to the tent, and brought back with him a basket of food and a bottle of wine, which he pressed upon the stranger.

Without waiting to thank him, the object of his kindness seized the cold meat and bread, and ate it ravenously, and drank freely of the wine.

"You are very kind, sir!" he said, as soon as he had satisfied his great hunger. "Yours are the first kind words I have heard for years!"

"Is it possible?"

"Yes, it is true. I have suffered a martyrdom. My enemies may be even now upon my track, and he sprang up and looked about him with a startled air. "Hark! Do you hear anything?"

Walter listened, and heard nothing but the waves beating against the rocks.

"No, I hear nothing," he replied. "Have no fears, sir, I will protect you!"

"Thanks, a thousand thanks for the assurance!" cried the stranger, sinking down again upon his former seat. "And yet I fear you cannot! If I should be retaken—"

He left the sentence unfinished, save by a horrible groan.

Walter was full of astonishment at the singular adventure that had befallen him, and wondered in his own mind whether the strange gentleman might not be a lunatic.

But one glance at his countenance dispelled that idea as quickly as it was formed.

"Tell me who you are, sir," he said, in his soothing tones. "Confide in me. I may be of some assistance to you. Who do you fear will retake you?"

The stranger hesitated, and glanced at the tent.

"Are we alone—quite alone?" he asked.

"Quite so. My servant is asleep in the tent, but he cannot hear a word spoken at this distance, with all the noise of the sea!"

The stranger, reassured on this point, gave Walter's face an earnest scrutiny, but, reading there only the tokens of a noble character, seemed to take courage, and said,—

"I have been wandering about among these rocks for a day or two, with no food to eat, and nothing to drink, except the stagnant water I found in pools in the rocks. I—you hear nothing?"

"Nothing—nothing whatever?"

"I have escaped from cruel enemies," continued the stranger, "enemies who have imprisoned me, and kept me in chains. Three days since I managed to break my chains and flee!"

"But why should your enemies chain and imprison you?" demanded Walter. "Surely, such things cannot be done in England!"

"The pretended that I am insane. I have

been shut up in a private insane asylum for years—many years! So many are the years that long since I ceased to count them! But all the while my enemy knew that I was as sane as he!"

Despite the wild manner of the stranger, Walter felt that he spoke truth—that he was perfectly sane!

"But who shut you up as insane?" he asked.

The stranger's face darkened, and his eyes flashed with emotion, as he responded,—

"I cannot speak his name—not yet! He has usurped my place. He has given out that I am dead or insane, but I shall yet appear to him an avenger!"

"But if you escaped three days since," questioned the artist, "why did you not hasten to confront your enemy and demand restitution and justice?"

"But I escaped in rags, and without money," replied the stranger, hopelessly. "My keepers searched for me, of course, near my enemy. It was clearly my safest course to hide until the first search was past, and then make my appearance."

Walter uttered an assent.

"Words would fail to describe to you the injuries I have received at the hands of my enemy," continued the stranger, morosely.

"Rank, wealth, an honourable name, all gone! And more than all, worse than all, my only child, my daughter, has been taught to look upon me as dead or a lunatic! Sometimes it seems as though I shall go mad!"

He pressed his hands over his eyes as if to shut out a view of his miseries.

"Do not despair!" urged Walter, affected by the sorrow of his strange guest. "Live for revenge!"

"Revenge!" repeated the injured man.

"Yes; the hope of thrusting the usurper from my place, and unmasking him in all his wickedness, is all that has kept me alive during these years of captivity. Look there!"

He folded back his ragged sleeves and displayed a deep mark worn into his wrists.

"That is the mark made by the fetters I have worn for years, with but few intervals of relief from them," he said. "It was in one of those intervals I made my escape. You would not think me formidable, but wherever he is, I know that my enemy is sitting in deadly fear of my coming, for he must have heard of my escape. He dreads me more than death!"

"Then why did he not kill you?"

"Because he thought the cell of an insane asylum, with bolts, bars, chains, and fetters, and an assumed name, were an effectual grave for me. No one in England knows my story, and my keepers laugh in my face when I try to tell it to them!"

"Great Heaven!" cried Walter. "Can such wrongs be perpetrated in our happy country? Can a gentleman be confined on a charge of lunacy by an enemy who usurps his place?"

"The wrong was not all done in England," said the stranger. "It began on the Continent. Besides my enemy, there is but one man in the world who knows my wrongs, and he was an accomplice in my perpetration!"

"But tell me what happened to you on the Continent?" said the artist.

"Not yet! Ah, do you hear anything? I fear pursuit. I met several persons during my flight to the coast, and fear that I may be traced to my hiding-place."

"There is no one in the vicinity," returned Walter, "and if there were, I would defend you with my life!"

The stranger grasped the artist's hand with fervent gratitude and with tearful eyes.

"Tell me your name, sir," he said. "Tell me, that I may see you again when I shall have recovered my rights."

"My name is Walter Lorraine. I am an artist, and your friend. Command my services, sir, as you have my sympathy. If I can aid you—"

"Could you lend me sufficient money to get to London, sir?" asked his companion hesitatingly.

Walter drew out his purse from his pocket, and having removed a small portion of its contents for his own immediate use, he placed the purse, containing the remainder, in the hands of the wronged man, answering,—

"There is enough to take you to London, sir, and engage the services of one of the best lawyers to be found in the metropolis. I beg of you to be guarded in approaching your enemy. Consult a lawyer, make known to him the whole story, and offer proofs of your identity. Then proceed to overwhelm the villain who has usurped your place."

"Heaven bless you, Mr. Lorraine. Your timely help has rescued me from absolute despair. I will act upon your advice this very day."

"Does this villain claim your name and title," asked Walter, "as yourself? Does he personate you?"

"No. He claims them as the next heir. He has held my place so many years that I may find it difficult to dispossess him, but I can soon prove my identity."

"If your daughter should recognise you, it would be the strongest proof you could have. Is she still living?"

"Alas! I know not!" groaned the stranger. "If she lived she must be grown up, and entering upon womanhood. When I think of her I cannot restrain my impatience to ascertain if she is yet living, and if so, to reveal myself to her. I must hasten—"

He arose and looked about him with a wild and startled air, without waiting to finish his sentence.

"Before you go," said Walter, "you must allow me to offer you a change of clothing. Your pursuers can track you but too easily in your present suit. Come to my tent. My servant is sound asleep."

The stranger hesitated, but the offer and advice of the artist were too good to be rejected, and with many thanks he accepted them.

Walter then led the way to his tent, his companion following, with many scrutinising and suspicious glances at the neighbouring rocks, and they were soon within the little apartment.

"Sit down upon my bed, sir!" said Walter, "while I get out your clothing. How fortunate that are so nearly the same size as myself!"

The stranger smiled sadly.

Walter's form was naturally slender, although sufficiently well-developed about the chest, and it had a sufficiency of flesh; but his companion's was naturally portly, though now gaunt and shrivelled.

The artist unlocked his portmanteau, throwing out hose, linen, and every necessity of attire, and having laid these on the bed he said,—

"You can make your toilet at your leisure. My man sleeps very soundly always, and you will find it impossible to arouse him. While you dress yourself, therefore, I will go outside and watch. Should any one approach the vicinity I will warn you."

Without heeding the tearful thanks of his guest, the artist passed outside the tent, and began his self-imposed duty as sentinel.

His feelings had been deeply enlisted in favour of his guest. Although his heart was always open to pity, and relieve the miseries of others, yet there was something about the object of his present benefactions that appealed to feelings deeper than pity. Strange as the fact may seem, he had already conceived a filial tenderness towards him.

Despite the man's distressed appearance there was a nobleness about his face that struck the artist as familiar, and it seemed to him as though he had somewhere seen those dark, despairing eyes before—but without their depths of gloom.

In vain he asked himself where.

He paced slowly around his tent, keeping a vigilant eye upon the rocks in front as well as the road behind, and meditating upon the singular history of his guest.

At length, as he paused in front of the tent, the flap was gently lifted, and the stranger asked,—

"Is it you, Mr. Loraine?"

Walter replied in the affirmative.

"You see no one lurking about?"

"No one. We are the only persons in the vicinity."

As this assurance reached him, the stranger emerged from the tent fully clad in the artist's extra suit of clothing. It fitted him very well, owing to his gauntness, and he would have looked quite like another man had not his wildness of manner and ghastliness of visage been too apparent. He had combed his tangled beard and long locks, and Walter felt more than ever convinced that he had not done wrong in believing every word he had uttered—so greatly improved was his personal appearance, and much more sane did he now look.

"A week ago, Mr. Loraine," he said, in a voice broken by deep emotion, "nay, an hour ago, I hated mankind on account of the bitter wrongs and injuries I had received; but you have aroused anew my faith in my species; you have given me hope and encouragement to proceed in the unmasking of the villain who has robbed me of all that life held dear. I was hungry, ragged, and penniless. You have fed me, clothed me, and given me your purse. The time may come when I can express my gratitude to you in more fitting terms; and should the occasion ever arise, I would gladly lay down my life for your happiness!"

Walter pressed his hand in silence.

The fugitive seemed overcome with his emotions, and leaning on the artist, wept freely. The tears relieved the pressure on his heart and brain, and he soon said, more calmly,—

"Pardon my weakness. These are the first tears I have shed for years. Wrongs have failed to make me weep, but your kindness is so unexpected, so bounteous! I did not know that there was a man in the world who would do for a nameless fugitive what you have done for me!"

"There are very many, I trust," replied Walter. "But you are weak. Let me prevail upon you to lie down upon my bed until morning. I will watch outside. You need sleep—"

The fugitive shook his head.

"But I shall see you again, sir?" said the artist. "There is my card. I expect to return to London within a week, and shall be glad to see you at my chambers!"

"By that time I hope to see you in my own house," responded the fugitive. "But if I am disappointed in my hopes, I will call upon you at your residence. There I will make known to you who and what I am, and all the details of my wrongs."

He glanced restlessly around him, and as he did so his gaze fell upon a single light, burning in a tower-chamber at Rock Land—a light that showed that some uneasy vigil was kept even in that stately mansion.

"Ah!" he said. "That is not a servant's chamber!"

"You know the place, then?" questioned Walter.

The fugitive's face was for a moment convulsed with emotion, and then he answered,—

"I have heard of Rock Land. Who is there?"

"It's owner, the Earl of Lindenwood!"

The countenance of the fugitive looked as if carved from stone, as he heard the reply, and he asked, hesitatingly, and in a hollow voice,—

"Is—he alone?"

"No, his niece is with him—the Lady Geraldine Summer!"

The stranger uttered a cry that seemed to come from the depths of his soul.

"I—I must go," he faltered, as soon as he could speak. "Do not follow me. I shall proceed to London in the morning. Farewell!"

He wrung the artist's hands, pressed it to his lips, and then turned and sped in the direction of Rock Land.

Walter gazed after him in wonder, but soon

concluded that the fugitive had been overcome by his fears and restlessness, and preferred to hasten to his concealment among the rocks.

Sleepless and excited by the strange events of the night, Walter seated himself and endeavoured to calmly review the statement of his late companion.

In the midst of his musings he was startled by a piercing shriek, that rang over the rocks like the cry of a lost soul.

The next moment the cry was hushed, and he distinctly heard the sound of wheels upon the road.

He sprang to his feet, aroused by the fear that the fugitive had been captured by his pursuers; but when he reached the road no person nor carriage was in sight. Searching the rocks for some trace of his new friend, he soon discovered marks of a struggle, a tiny pool of blood, and a handkerchief he had given his strange visitor.

"They have captured him!" he cried. "They are bearing him away to his prison! Would that he had told me his name, or the place of his imprisonment! Can it be that this terrible mystery is to remain a mystery for ever?"

CHAPTER XVII.

What a state is guilt,
When everything alarms it! like a sentinel,
Who sleeps upon his watch, it wakes in dread,
Even at a breath of wind. —Scanderberg.

LORD ROSENBERY had duly received the communication sent him by the Earl of Lindenwood, and had conceived the liveliest hopes from its contents. Knowing the Lady Geraldine to be the idol of society, he did not doubt but that a brief seclusion from its charms would induce her to consent to become his bride. These hopes were further strengthened by the departure of Walter Loraine for the seaside, although, fortunately for him, he did not suspect his destination to be Rock Land.

Rosenbury had no mean idea of his personal attributes, and fancied that, in the absence of his rival, he would be irresistible. At first, he had some thought of following to Rock Land and trying the effect of his fascinations in that secluded spot; but he finally concluded that his lordship could present the case as well as himself to his obdurate niece, and that there was really no necessity for him to deprive himself of any of the enjoyments of the season, even for so brief a period.

Relying upon the assurance of the Earl that he might proceed with the preparations for his bridal, Rosenbury forgot some of his usual caution, and hastened to inform her ladyship that he was about to wed the Lady Geraldine.

"Impossible!" exclaimed Lady Rosenbury, in accents of surprise. "Are you not mistaken, Raymond? Do you not deceive yourself? Geraldine told me that she did not love you."

"Possibly she does not cherish for me a romantic affection," responded Rosenbury; "but she will, nevertheless, marry me—and that before the season is over."

"Has she given you her word to that effect?"

"Well, no," answered Rosenbury, concealing his chagrin and annoyance at the question under a mask of carelessness. "But her uncle has promised for her, and requested me to make known our engagement. I imagine that, after the engagement is once announced, the Lady Geraldine will think twice before dismissing me again."

Lady Rosenbury could not conceal her indignation at this speech.

"I am ashamed of you, Raymond," she declared, her face bearing witness to the sincerity of her words. "You must make no such announcement until Geraldine herself accepts you; and that time, I am inclined to think, will never come. If you cause any announcement to be made of a false engagement, the shame of chagrin will all fall upon yourself. Geraldine is independent enough to

state the truth, and I can bear testimony to her words."

"You don't want her to marry me," said Rosenbury, bitterly, and with an angry flush on his face. "I dare say she told you she had refused me, and you replied that she had done right!"

"You speak truly, Raymond! Lady Geraldine informed me of your proposal to her, and told me she had refused it! I think she did right in refusing her hand where she could not give her heart!"

"But if you had used your influence with her, she might have changed her mind—she loves you so much!"

"And for that very reason, Raymond, I should be very careful to say nothing to influence her. I could never take advantage of her trusting affection for me to induce her to take a step from which her own heart recoils. On the contrary, I would endeavour to act a mother's part to that motherless girl."

"And yet I dare say," remarked Raymond, "that you did not hesitate to influence her in behalf of your favourite, Walter Loraine."

Lady Rosenbury looked surprised, and asked,—

"How came you to know of Walter's love for Lady Geraldine?"

"Mrs. Loraine told me on her death-bed!"

"Ah, I see! And it was in consequence of her communication you wished to send Walter off to Palestine?"

Rosenbury assented, glad to excuse his late propositions to Walter upon that ground, in order to divert more troublesome suspicions.

"I think, Raymond," said her ladyship, gravely, "it would have been more manly to have given Walter an equal chance with yourself, instead of trying to get him out of the way!"

"But, with your influence to aid him, he is far more than a match for me!"

Lady Rosenbury looked thoughtful.

During her first disappointment, after she had left Walter's studio with the Lady Geraldine, she had decided that the maiden did not love the artist, but on subsequent reflection she had remembered her blushes on his name being mentioned before the visit, and she had reversed her decision.

She now believed that Walter's affection was returned, but that Lady Geraldine's pride would for ever remain a barrier between them.

"My influence will not be needed in Walter's behalf, Raymond," she said, sadly. "If it were I would cheerfully use it, if I knew that Lady Geraldine loved him!"

"But you would not use it in my behalf, because she regards me with aversion! I believe your ladyship would dislike to greet her as a daughter-in-law!"

"You are wrong, Raymond. There is no one whom I would so gladly welcome as my daughter, but she is unfitted for you. Your tastes and hers are very different. But why not choose some one else? There are many ladies, young and handsome, to whom you might pay your addresses with reasonable hopes of success. I should very much like to see you married!"

"You will have that happiness soon, mother," responded Rosenbury, calling her ladyship by the tender title that used to come so naturally to his lips, but which to him now sounded forced and awkward. "I am determined to wed Geraldine, and I am confident that the Earl can persuade or coerce her to accept me!"

"Do I hear aright?" exclaimed Lady Rosenbury. "Would you take an unwilling bride to the altar? You are a degenerate Rosenbury, Raymond! You have in you little of the spirit of your noble ancestors, to talk of coercing a lady into a marriage with you!"

Rosenbury turned pale at this remark, and an uneasy expression flitted over his features.

It seemed to him as if the fact that he was not a Rosenbury was made apparent in all his words and actions, and as if her ladyship must untimely suspect his identity.

But these thoughts were but the result of his cowardly fears and ever-present consciousness of his imposture, for not the slightest suspicion of the truth had ever entered the mind of Lord Rosenbury.

"I—I intend to devote myself to her after our marriage," he said, hesitatingly, yet with sufficient decision to show that he did not intend to change his mind upon the subject, "and I don't doubt but I can make her happy! You and my father married for love, but many do not love when they marry, and yet live very happily. I will make no announcement of an engagement yet, out of respect to your scruples, but I cannot give up Geraldine! If Walter Lorraine loves her, so do I! He has already left the field to me, having gone off somewhere on the sea coast. Her uncle approves the match, and I am inclined to think that he will make her see it in the same light as himself!"

Lady Rosenbury sighed.

She felt it would be vain to argue with Raymond, or try to induce him to yield all pretensions to the hand of Lady Geraldine. She saw that his cold, selfish heart had been aroused to a degree of passion of which she had not deemed him capable, and this passion was, unfortunately, all lavished upon a being who could not return it.

"I can make no more efforts to dissuade you from your course, Raymond," she said, in a disappointed tone. "I can only hope that the honourable principles and keen sense of justice that characterized the late Lord Rosenbury may have been inherited, even in some slight degree, by his son. The teachings I have lavished upon you seem to have been thrown away, and leave you to your sense of what is right!"

Rosenbury bit his lips.

It was no part of his programme to alienate from himself what little affection her ladyship might continue to cherish for him, and he felt sorry that any cause of disagreement had arisen between them. While, therefore, he would not give up his plans concerning Geraldine, he yet endeavoured to enlist Lady Rosenbury's sympathies in his favour.

In the midst of his vain efforts, a rap was heard at the door of the apartment, and Took, Rosenbury's valet, entered, bearing a card upon a salver.

"A person to see your lordship," he said, in a tone which showed that he entertained no high degree of the person he announced. "He seems to be intoxicated; your lordship, but it was impossible to get rid of him. He says he must see your lordship on important business!"

"An intoxicated fellow asking for me?" exclaimed Rosenbury. "Send him away, Took. I have no business with intoxicated fellows. Is he a gentleman?"

"No, your lordship, only a low fellow!"

"Turn him away then, Took. You should know better than to come to me about any such fellow!"

"But, your lordship," said the valet, who despite his contempt for the visitor had received from him a handsome fee for admitting and announcing him, "he says your lordship will regret not having seen him if he goes away, and he begs you just to look at his card!"

As he spoke, Took advanced the salver, on which rested a dirty piece of pasteboard, with a name inscribed upon it in a straggling handwriting.

Rosenbury involuntarily glanced at the card, and the room seemed to reel around him.

"Colte Lorraine!" he said aloud, unconscious that he spoke. "Colte Lorraine! Who is he?"

"He is the husband of your old nurse," replied Lady Rosenbury, wondering at Raymond's strange emotion.

"But he is dead. He—he died in Australia!"

"It was but a false report," returned her ladyship. "He caused a letter to be written home to that effect, as Walter wrote me the other day!"

"Not dead?" ejaculated Rosenbury. "Not

dead!" Lady Rosenbury repeated her explanation.

"Go to him, Took," commanded Rosenbury, as soon as he could command his thoughts. "Show him into the drawing room, and say that I will be with him directly!"

Took bowed and withdrew to execute the command, too discreet to show any surprise at its singularity.

"This—is this very strange!" stammered Rosenbury, "I supposed he died years ago. Mrs. Lorraine told me so!"

"She believed so, Raymond. Walter wrote me a long letter the evening before his departure from London, in which he stated the particulars of his father's history in Australia. I saw Lorraine at Walter's studio, and knew him at once—"

"And why did you not tell me?" interrupted Rosenbury. "Why did you not tell me he had returned?"

"You forget yourself, Raymond," said Lady Rosenbury, gently. "I could not suppose that the subject would have any interest for you!"

Rosenbury was alarmed at the interest he had already betrayed in Lorraine, and hastened to say, with ill-assumed carelessness,—

"It's of no consequence, mother. I was interested in him on Walter's account—that's all! I suppose I must go down and see the fellow!"

"Perhaps I had better accompany you," remarked her ladyship. "He may have come hither on Walter's account—possibly with a message!"

"I wouldn't have you see the fellow for the world, mother!" cried Rosenbury, quite alarmed. "Took says he is intoxicated. I will bring you any message he may have for you!"

Rather pleased at the solicitude thus expressed for her, Lady Rosenbury acquiesced in Raymond's decision, and he left the room alone to seek his visitor.

It would be impossible to describe the shock he had received on learning that Colte Lorraine was alive and under his very roof!

Pale and trembling he hastened to the drawing-room, with his thoughts in a tumult, and with but one desire—that of ridding himself of his dangerous visitor!

Opening the door with a noiseless movement, he advanced into the apartment, and found his visitor engaged in earnest contemplation of the articles of vertu and unconscious of his entrance.

He seized the opportunity of regarding Lorraine before betraying himself, in order to gain some idea of the best manner of dealing with him.

Lorraine had fitted himself up, from his wife's legacy, in a manner which he conceived appropriate for a visit to Lord Rosenbury. A dress suit adorned his person, and his great hands were encased in white kids, outside of which were ostentatiously displayed several immense rings. A pair of tightly fitting pumps enclosed his feet, and his head was ornamented with a new hat which set jauntily on the back of his head and a little at one side, after his characteristic fashion.

Having thus attired himself, he imagined that he was the "the glass of fashion," and would have been highly indignant at the assertion of the astute Took that he was no gentleman had he heard it.

In order to fortify himself for the proposed interview with Rosenbury, he had had recourse to his favorite stimulants, and his mind was in its usual hazy condition, as he stood, with one eye closed, surveying the ornaments of the drawing-room.

Little used as was Rosenbury to the study of human nature, he saw that he had nothing at present to fear from the person before him, and he conceived a hope that he might be able to manage him.

"You wished to see me, Mr. Lorraine?" he said, after a protracted survey.

Lorraine turned around abruptly, made an effort to apply a gold-framed eye-glass to his

visual organ, but, falling in that, ejaculated,—

"Is this Lud Rosenbury?"

Rosenbury bowed.

"Glad see you, m' ind. Hope well. I'm Colte L'raime, service!"

With this announcement, Lorraine held out his hand and grasped the reluctant hand of his host with a violike earnestness.

"You're Lud Roseb'y, he, he?" continued the visitor. "Good joke, eh? He, he!"

He thrust out a finger at Rosenbury, and laughed immoderately, still clinging to his hand.

Rosenbury looked around nervously, and replied,—

"Pray, do not speak so loud, Mr. Lorraine! You have something to say to me, have you not?"

Lorraine seemed to feel some astonishment at this style of address, and said,—

"I say. Old woman's dead, eh?"

"If you mean Mrs. Lorraine, she is!"

"Thought so. 'Mrs. L'raime,' eh? Good joke! You's with her last moments?"

"I was!"

"Thought so. Made rev'lution, un'stand. Is't true?"

Rosenbury bowed, with a keen sense of humiliation as he did so. He did not even like to own to this man, his father, who had placed him in his present position, that it was not his rightfully.

"Then we un'stan' each other," said Lorraine, familiarly. "Got good deal say to you. Is la'ship at home?"

"She is not!" returned Rosenbury, fearing his visitor would next demand to see Lady Rosenbury.

"So much better. Can't listen!"

Despite his annoyance and anxiety, Rosenbury could not suppress a smile at the proposterous idea of Lady Rosenbury playing eavesdropper.

"You need have no fears, Mr. Lorraine," he observed coldly. "We shall not be interrupted. Proceed with your communication!"

"Mr. Lorraine," repeated the visitor, evidently greatly amused at his host's dignified coldness. "He, he! Call that good joke!"

"If you have anything to say to me, please say it," said Rosenbury, somewhat impatiently.

Lorraine's eyes twinkled, and he winked at hosts familiarly, as he replied,—

"Souse me, Raymon'. Know your patience. Felt so 'self. Day so hot—feel overcome heat. Mus' take nap. Shan't be long!"

As he began to loosen his necktie Rosenbury said, hastily,—

"You can't take a nap here. If you have anything to say to me, say it. Or go somewhere else and sleep off your drunkenness. I can't have you here!"

"But you mus'," returned Lorraine, doggedly. "Talk you pretty soon. Jes' now too sleepy!"

Retreating to a sofa, the unwelcome visitor threw himself upon it, drew a handkerchief over his face, and composed himself for a nap.

Rosenbury stood the picture of stupefaction, and gazed upon him.

"What if Lady Rosenbury should come into the room?" he asked himself. "What if a servant even were to make an appearance while Lorraine lay there in his drunken slumbers?"

And yet he dared not summon a servant, and have the fellow thrust out.

CHAPTER XVIII.

I'll keep this secret from the world,
As warily as those that deal in poison
Keep poison from their children.

—Webster.

Almost choking with rage and mortification at the ridiculous position in which he found himself, as the guardian of Lorraine's drunken slumbers, Rosenbury stared at his visitor in

silence. Had he dared to have done so he would have instantly expelled him from the house. But he realised that his only course was that of conciliation, and that the man before him had the power to strip him of his honour and wealth, and place his hated rival in his stead—the facts and circumstances in the case being sufficient to establish the evidence of the single witness beyond all question.

Unconscious of the tumultuous thoughts in Rosenbury's mind, Lorraine stretched himself out in the easiest position possible, and dropped almost instantly into sleep. The handkerchief with which he had covered his face fell partly from it, and his vulgar red visage was thrown into full view.

Rosenbury looked at him in disgust. Brought up as he had been among gentlemen of rank, Rosenbury had acquired a haughtiness of spirit, and a fastidiousness of taste which had not been exceeded by the noblest of his school and college companions. His pride of rank had always been scrupulous in exacting the utmost respect and attention from all who came in contact with him.

It may, therefore, be judged with what keen humiliation and mortification he had realised that he was not a Rosenbury—that he was the son of a hireling put in the place of the rightful heir.

But even the realisation had not broken his haughty spirit, for he had believed himself to be the sole repository of the terrible secret.

As he looked upon the face and form before him, with the full knowledge that this vulgar fellow was his own father, the author of his being, he felt as if he could strangle him then and there, and thus rid himself for ever of one who shared his secret.

But this paroxysm passed, and Rosenbury sat down, endeavouring to think over a plan of action.

He resolved that he would not have Lorraine calling at Rosenbury House, as such visits could not fail to excite comment among the servants, and might possibly arouse suspicions in the mind of Lady Rosenbury.

"There is an immeasurable distance between us, and he must feel it!" thought the young man, with a darkening brow. "Our paths must lie very far apart. Perhaps it is as well to understand the matter to-day as any time!"

He endeavoured to study Lorraine's face, in order to judge of his character, but he could gain little information from the stolid, expressionless visage before him.

From his dress, however, and the rings that glittered outside his kid gloves, he gathered the knowledge that his visitor loved display, and that money was, probably, all he desired.

After this decision, Rosenbury breathed freer, concluding that it would be an easy matter to dispose of him, and that he had nothing to fear.

He had hardly given himself this assurance when he reflected that Lorraine was probably, judging from his late behaviour very communicative when under the influence of liquor, and that at any time the carefully guarded secret of his life might be made a subject of tavern gossip, and that in the moment of his greatest happiness he was liable to be thrown from the proud eminence he now occupied and see another take his place.

A cold dew broke out upon Rosenbury's face, and his form trembled with a sudden fear that penetrated to his heart.

The punishment for his wickedness and treachery to another had already begun.

The moments of careless security he had enjoyed, since listening to Mrs. Lorraine's revelation, had vanished for ever, and he had entered upon a new life, that was to be made up of ceaseless anxieties and fears.

As he sat there, regarding Lorraine with a look which—if glances could have slain—would have annihilated that individual on the spot, he heard the sudden click of dainty boot-heels on the mosaic marble floor of the corridor, and then followed the rustling of a silk dress.

He had hardly time to spring to his feet with

a frightened look when Lady Rosenbury entered the apartment.

"Are you alone, Raymond?" she asked. "I felt anxious to learn if Walter had sent any message by his father, for I cannot conceive what other errand Lorraine would have here. Ah! what is that?"

Her question referred to the snoring of Lorraine, which had suddenly grown in intensity. As she asked the question, she glanced in the direction from which the sound proceeded, and beheld Lorraine lying upon the sofa, with his dusty feet elevated upon one arm of it, and his plentifully oiled head lying upon the other.

For a moment amusement and indignation struggled for the mastery upon her ladyship's countenance, and then she said, gravely,—

"Raymond, what does this mean?"

"I understand it no better than yourself, mother," responded Rosenbury, hardly knowing what to say, and feeling quite desperate. "When I came down to see this fellow, he was in the condition you see him now. I suppose he is really Lorraine?"

"Yes, Raymond. But why did you not have him expelled from the house? It must be done immediately?"

Her ladyship moved towards the bell-pull, but Rosenbury stretched forth his hand to detain her, saying, with considerable agitation,—

"Don't ring, mother. The servants know from Toke that he is Walter Lorraine's father, and as Walter visits you a great deal, it would be best not to humiliate him before the servants. On Walter's account I have spared this creature, whom, otherwise, I should have put into the street!"

"You are right, Raymond," responded Lady Rosenbury, studying Rosenbury's countenance with an unsatisfied look. "As Walter's father, Lorraine must not be expelled with violence. I wish, however, you would awaken him, and dismiss him as soon as possible!"

She turned and swept from the apartment, not altogether satisfied with Rosenbury's explanations, knowing well as she did the animosity he had always cherished against Walter. She was well aware that Raymond had a petty and ignoble disposition, which would delight in nothing more than to treat with ignominy any friend to the young artist; and why he should have lost such an excellent opportunity as was now afforded him seemed to her ladyship something of a mystery.

Rosenbury read something of her incredulity in his professions before she left the room, and when she had withdrawn his face looked savage in its passion.

Remembering his agitation on reading the card of Lorraine, and learning that he was in existence, he feared that he had already given her ladyship the idea that he possessed a secret in connection with his visitor, and that fear almost maddened him.

Proceeding to the sofa, he seized Lorraine by the shoulder and shook him fiercely, calling upon him to awake.

Under his vigorous treatment his visitor yawned, stretched himself, and opened his eyes.

Rosenbury drew him up into a sitting posture.

"Where 'm I?" asked Lorraine, looking around him, his utterance still thick and impeded, as, however, it generally was. "Ah! Rosenbury House! And here's ludship! 'Souse me for goin' sleep, but overcome by heat. Did you wake m' up?"

"I did!" returned Rosenbury. "You have slept long enough. It is time to proceed to business!"

"You woke m' up?" remarked Lorraine. "You wanted talk with me? Heart yawned over me, eh? Realise, Raymon', that I'm yer long-lost father, eh?"

He arose as he spoke, and before Rosenbury was aware of his intention had clasped that fastidious personage in his arms, and was embracing him with great fervour.

"Father loves you, m' son," remarked Lorraine, pathetically, straining Rosenbury to

his breast. "Walter's never took yer place in m' heart. Blood's thicker 'n water, an' yer m' bes' b'loved! All's at peace, now, Raymon'. Life's all flowers an' money. Sweet to 'turn an' 'ceive such a welcome, m' son!"

Rosenbury struggled frantically to free himself from his father's embrace, but Lorraine seemed to take his convulsive movements as the results of emotion, as he said, soothingly,—

"There there, m' son! Don't take on so! Ain't s'prised at your 'motion. Feel so 'self, 'Strain yer joy, Raymon'."

Rosenbury succeeded in jerking himself loose from his companion, and said, angrily,—

"Cease this foolish mummery. If you have anything to say to me say it, but do not lay your hand upon me again!"

Lorraine seemed disappointed and grieved by these words, and stared at his son, as if unwilling to accept the evidence of his senses. He had expected to be received with open arms by the son for whom he had so deeply missed, to be made his boon companion, and an honoured guest at his house, and to share with him the fortune left by the late Lord Rosenbury.

He had had dreams of sitting at Rosenbury's table, and quaffing with him the rich old wines that had lain for years in their vaults; dreams of lounging through the handsome rooms of town and country mansions, and being at home in all; dreams of ordering about the servants with a lordly air, as if he were joint master of the establishment; and dreams of driving about in the Rosenbury family carriage, to the great wonder and admiration of his former acquaintances and friends.

It was with these pleasant visions before his eyes that he had exchanged his son for the rightful heir in their infancy so many years before; and these visions had cheered him throughout his wandering life in Australia, and brought him home on hearing of Lord Rosenbury's death.

There was a real pathos in the voice of the erring man, as he said,—

"An' this is my reward! Well has the poic said, Raymon', that's sharper 'n a snake's tooth 't' have thankless child! Wouldn't b'lieved it! Even Walter, poor injured Walter, treated me better 'n you do! If he was real son, couldn't be kin'er. 'Shall 'mem'er this!"

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Rosenbury, becoming alarmed at the effect of his words. "I spoke thoughtlessly. I am glad to see you—very glad indeed! Sit down, and let us have a little conversation together!"

"You 'knowledge our 'lationship, m' son?" asked Lorraine, anxiously.

"Yes, yes."

"But you don't call me father?"

"I dare not. Some one might overhear us," returned Rosenbury. "It is better to be very secret about our relationship, for if Lady Rosenbury had the slightest suspicion of the fact, she would not sleep until Walter was restored to his rights."

"Just so," assented Lorraine, taking a seat.

"Has la'ship any s'picion?"

"I think not, as yet. She came in here a few minutes ago and saw you asleep, and I am sure she thought it very strange that I should allow that. She wanted the servants to put you out—"

"Oh, she did?" exclaimed Lorraine, angrily. "Well la'ship 'll find can't have everything she wants! I've come live with you, m' son; guess la'ship 'll find I'm as much consequences as herself—eh, Raymon'?"

Rosenbury recoiled from the prospect thus presented of having his father under the same roof with himself, and hastened to say,—

"But this is impossible. I cannot have you live with me. Do you not see such a thing would provoke suspicion? How could I explain your continued presence here to her ladyship? No, you must not only live apart from me, but you must not come to see me, must not mention my name to anyone, nor hint that

you know me. The sooner you understand this the better!"

This was very unpleasant intelligence to Loraine, and he endeavoured to combat his son's resolution, but in vain.

"As to what I owe you," continued Rosenbury, "you will not find me ungrateful. You would like some pecuniary assistance, would you not?"

Loraine assented.

"Suppose I were to give you a neat little sum with which to buy a small business—"

"No shopkeeping for me!" interrupted Loraine, "I shouldn't think venture 'gent such a thing, an, you so rich! Going to be a gentleman of leisure. Want plenty money, an' do nothin'."

"Very well, then, I will settle an annuity upon you—"

"Don't want 'nuff, Raymon'. Prefer have money when want it. 'Nuffies are bother. Can't have money only so often. P'raps I'll want it every week!"

"If you do, you must not come in person for it. You send me a note. You want some to-day, I suppose?"

As Loraine assented Rosenbury drew out his purse, and handed to him, adding,—

"Be careful that you do not make your demands too often. Where do you live?"

"In Kensington. Wal'er wrote note to land-lady, an' she's given me a nice suite rooms. Very comfort'ble. She's used to my ways, an' got on first rate!"

"I think you had better return to Rosenbury Heath, and take possession of the cottage. I'll furnish it for you, and you can hire a neighbour to keep house for you."

"No, Raymon', I prefer town life. Don't tend to hide 'self in country 'gain. Need more 'otment—theatres—concerts—an' all that!"

Rosenbury made no attempt to overcome this resolution, but replied,—

"Well, do as you like, only keep silent. Have you seen Walter more than once?"

"Yes—twice. First time before old woman died. Second day la'ship an' girl went see Wal'er. Mos' sorry I went that time. La'ship an' girl went off soon after I 'rived, an' Wal'er felt awful. 'Fraid I've broke off the match between her an' Wal'er, but 'tentional. Felt sorry ever since!"

"Lady Rosenbury and a young lady were with Walter when you called on him last!" exclaimed Rosenbury. "The young lady must have been Lady Geraldine Summers. Ah! I see the reason Walter left town!"

His face glowed with sudden joy. He believed that the sight of the vulgar Loraine had either caused Lady Geraldine to refuse Walter, if he had proposed to her, or to treat him so coldly as to extinguish all hopes within his heart, and, under his view, he could readily explain Walter's depression on the night he had enticed him into the gambling-house.

"You needn't regret that visit," he said, in a more cordial tone than he had yet used to his visitor. "You did me a service on that occasion which I shall not forget."

"How so?"

"Because I love that lady and desire to marry her, as I shall do ere long!"

"Don't, Raymon'. Let Wal'er have her. You've got his title an' money, so let him have the girl. That wouldn't be more 'n fair!"

Rosenbury laughed at the suggestion.

Loraine continued to plead, urging Walter's great kindness to him on his return, his for bearing to upbraid him for coming to see him while he had visitors, and thus dashing his hopes in regard to the Lady Geraldine, and his great liberality with money, &c., but he might as well have pleaded to a block of granite.

"There is no use in talking to me on this subject," said Rosenbury, coldly. "My mind is made up to marry the lady. Doubtless, Walter has given her up, and has no hopes whatever connected with her."

"You'd better do's I say, Raymon'," said Loraine, with a frown. "Wal'er been kin'an'

good to me, an' I ain't the man to forget it. 'Mem'er I can say things—"

"But you'd better not, for your own sake," replied Rosenbury, with sudden heat. "You are aware that when you placed me in my present position you committed a criminal offence, and you would be transported for it if the fact leaked out!"

This threat seemed so daunt Loraine, and he responded,—

"We won't say nothin' more about that. If you're 'termined to marry that young lady, I don't see's I can help it. But you must give me all the money I want whenever I ask for it—"

"Provided you don't ask too often," said Rosenbury, curtly, feeling that he had now the upper hand. "You must keep your distance and let me alone."

"Wal'er treated me better 'n this!" whined Loraine. "You'd better keep the right side of me, Raymon', or you may regret it!"

The words probably produced the same opinion on Rosenbury, for his manner grew conciliatory as he said,—

"You understand why I cannot have you here at present. Should Lady Rosenbury die, affairs, of course, would look different. In that case, I should insist upon your taking up your residence with me and should treat you well. Until she dies, however, we must be wary and cautious!"

Loraine agreed in this view of the case, and seemed quite amicable.

It was mostly seeming, for at heart he was deeply chagrined at his reception by his son. He could not help contrasting it with Walter's treatment of him, and he felt his heart incline to the latter.

Rosenbury conversed with him for some time longer, and endeavoured to make a friend of his visitor, whom he allowed to see how deeply he was held in fear, and Loraine began to conceive hopes of a brighter and happier future.

(To be continued.)

A BEAUTIFUL CLAIMANT.

CHAPTER XIX.

KENNETH MARTIN was back in London. No effort of his had succeeded in tracing his friend, and the little conclave assembled at Dr. Bolton's agreed that nothing would be gained by his remaining in Yorkshire. Better far that someone should be in London on the spot to, so to speak, keep a watch over Squire Thornton and his protégée.

Neither the Vicar nor Claude Maitland could well leave Bovington, so it was arranged that Kenneth should undertake the task of trying to find the so-called Marguerite Bovington in London; while the two men who, in their different ways had loved Kitty Thornton so dearly, waited with a faint hope of her return to her birthplace.

Dr. Smart had been forced to leave Yorkshire, with the mystery unsolved, but he was to do his part in the search for Vere.

The Persian would be two days in Cape Town, both on the outward and homeward voyage. Surely it would be hard if he could not discover some clue to the pretended heiress's past life? At least her name would be on the list of passengers.

He knew the date of her reaching England, and the ship she sailed by. It would be hard, indeed, if he could not find out something of her history; and, once armed with proofs she was an impostor, it would be easy to denounce her, and force her to confess.

Kenneth went to Crawley-gardens soon after his return to London, but did not succeed in seeing Ivy. The family being fully impressed with Clara's opinion that she was the object of his visits did not give him any chance of speaking to his real sweetheart. In

fact, it seemed to Kenneth, they took a malicious delight in preventing his getting a word with her.

Meanwhile, Clara's little airs of appropriation nearly maddened him, and he was getting ready for some desperate declaration when Mr. Netherton gave him an opening to explain his true wishes.

"I want your opinion on a knotty point!" said Ivy's father, meeting him the day after his unsuccessful visit. "I wouldn't mention it last night before the girls; but I am really very uneasy, and I think a clear head like yours might help me. I look on you almost as one of the family, you know, so I don't apologise for taking up your time."

Kenneth declared he should be delighted to assist Mr. Netherton; then he added, gravely,—

"It is quite true that my dearest wish is to enter your family, sir, but I had no idea you suspected it."

"Suspected it, my dear fellow! Why, we've all been wondering why you didn't speak out! Clara has ten thousand pounds of her own, and—"

"Only I have no wish whatever to marry her!" interrupted Kenneth. "Mr. Nether-

ton, I am in love with your daughter Ivy, and I should have told her so before now but for two things. I never by any chance can get a word with her alone, and you all seem to have taken up the notion I aspire to marry Miss Trevlyn."

Mr. Netherton stared.

"I'm sure Clara told my wife it was as good as settled, and that but for her aunt's sudden departure you would have been married before she ever came to us."

"I can only tell you, sir, on my honour, that I have never spoken a word of love to Miss Trevlyn. I have never sought her affections!"

"But you came to us in order to meet her?"

"I will confess the truth. I had reached an age when a man longs for a home of his own. I was not in love with Miss Trevlyn. I did not believe it was in my nature to love anyone, but I thought she would make me a suitable wife, and I came to Crawley-gardens, prepared to tell her so. She was from home, and I saw your daughter; from that hour I have never thought of a future apart from Ivy. I have not had a chance to tell her so, but I loved her from the first."

"She has not a penny!"

Kenneth smiled.

"And I am not what is called a rich man, but I can settle something on my wife, and offer her an easy home. Mr. Netherton, if you have one spark of kindness in your heart, don't forbid me to think of Ivy."

"I fell in love with her mother the first day I saw her. It is our story over again. I like you, Mr. Martin, and I believe you will make my little girl happy if she can care for you; but what is to be done about my step-daughter?"

Kenneth looked perplexed.

"I assure you Miss Trevlyn has no grounds for her conviction!"

"But she thinks she has. She has talked openly of the time when she should be your wife, and of her wedding. Now, Mr. Martin, you must see for yourself! you cannot propose to Ivy under her very eyes."

Kenneth sighed.

"I don't see why not?"

"It would be terrible—for Ivy, I mean. Her sister is a charming girl; but, between ourselves, her temper is rather variable. Were Clara Trevlyn to know my little Ivy had superseded her, the child's whole life would be made a burden to her."

"But I love Ivy. I must at least have a chance to plead my cause with her; and if she accepts me why should we be condemned to spend our lives apart because of Clara Trevlyn?"

"Clara went away to-day for a week," said Mr. Netherton, with the air of a conspirator. "My wife will be engaged to-night. If you

liked to come to supper you might speak to Ivy afterwards."

"I will come with pleasure; but do you mean that Mrs. Netherton will be opposed to my suit?"

"It's only human nature, I suppose, that a woman should prefer her own child's happiness to her stepdaughter's. Besides, if Ivy marries, my wife loses her housekeeper, secretary, and nursery governess. If you should win Ivy, Mr. Martin, all her little sisters will look on you as a thief!"

By this time they were in Kenneth's pleasant chambers.

Mr. Netherton sat in the comfortable arm-chair, his owner opposite him, thinking, a little sadly, how weak Ivy's father was. Loving her devotedly, as he did, Mr. Netherton yet seemed quite ready to sacrifice her to his younger children.

"You have not told me yet the subject on which you wanted my advice?" he said, gravely. "I need not tell you now how gladly I will give it to you!"

"It's troubled me a good deal," said Mr. Netherton, gravely; "and it's about Ivy!"

"About Ivy?"

Mr. Netherton told him the story of Mr. Hazelwood's call in the Cranley gardens, and his own subsequent visits to the hotel, and failure to find the pretended relation.

"I don't believe, Mr. Martin, a man would trouble himself to concoct such a story without some object."

"Certainly not!"

"I have no doubt in my own mind that he watched me from the house before he called. He trusted to my wife's not knowing much of her predecessor's history, and he succeeded admirably."

"I can't see his motive?"

"Nor I. You see he must have known something of my past life. He mentioned my dead wife's Christian name, and claimed to be her brother who went to Australia, an out-and-out never-do-well, by the way."

"I suppose you are quite certain the brother really died?"

"He died in my house, and I paid for his funeral. Besides, had he been the true Will Hazelwood he would not have given a false address. Whatever he wanted with us he gained at that interview, for he has never been near the house since."

Kenneth shook his head. He was more impressed by Mr. Netherton's story than he liked to confess.

"I suppose he could not be any relation of Ivy's mother?"

"When I met my first wife she was a governess. She had been brought up in an orphan asylum for officers' daughters. Her mother died at her birth, and her father when she was ten years old. She and her twin brother were devotedly attached; but Will was an out-and-out scamp. He had been adopted by a gentleman, but he never settled to anything; and, at last, his patron wearied of his follies, and shipped him to Australia. He spent every penny of his money before he had been there six months, worked his way home before the mast, resoled my house stricken with a mortal sickness, and died, nursed by his sister. Now, Mr. Martin, you will see the twins could have no living relations!"

"Cousins!" suggested Kenneth.

"I should say not. Captain Hazelwood left no relations, or his daughter would not have been admitted into an orphan asylum."

"And his wife?"

"I never heard anything about her save that she was beautiful. I have a miniature of her put away at home which I value, because it is the image of her daughter. My little Ivy inherits the same sweet face."

"I think the man must have meant to try and extort money," suggested Kenneth.

"Yet he spoke rather of having money to give away."

"At least you have heard nothing more of him," said Kenneth, hopefully, "so we may conclude there is no danger."

"I have heard nothing more of him," said Mr. Netherton, quickly; "but a very strange thing happened lately. Clara was at home alone, and a lady called. Like Mr. Hazelwood, she sent in no name, but merely asked to see Miss Trevlyn on business. Clara's curiosity was aroused, and she consented to receive the stranger. She describes her as a very handsome woman, dressed in deep mourning."

"And did she profess to be a relation?"

"No. It is mysterious altogether. Really, I begin to think my quiet home is haunted by strange events. She told Clara she was a great admirer of her genius. (I believe Clara once sent a few poems to one of the magazines), and had desired to make her acquaintance. My stepdaughter took all the flattery greedily, and the two spent a very cosy half-hour. As she rose to go the lady bent over Clara, and, in a theatrical whisper, bade her beware, for she had a foe in her own home, and if ever she wished to be spared a great danger she was to write to this lady."

"How could she if she did not know her name and address?"

"She left an address. Clara has been in rather a contrary mood lately, and she poured out the story of her visitor to her mother as soon as my wife came home, declaring she was being sacrificed to Ivy, and that even a stranger could see her wrongs. Mrs. Netherton did not side with her; but being rather tired of her lamentations she promised that the next time you came Ivy should spend the evening in the nursery, and you should be given every opportunity to declare your love. I should not have told you of this latter episode but for your confidence respecting Ivy."

"You do not mean that you connect the prophetic lady with the pretended Mr. Hazelwood?"

"I do; but—"

"I think you are over anxious."

"Listen, Martin!" and there was no mistaking the earnestness of his manner. "You and I both know the world. I ask you, would any woman of wealth and refinement call upon a contributor to the 'Post's Corner' in a drawing-room magazine to congratulate her on her genius? No; the gist of the matter, the true object of the woman's visit, was in her last words. She wants to injure Ivy, and thought she could do so by arousing Clara's jealousy."

"At any rate, sir, your remedy in this case is easy. Get the woman's address from Miss Netherton, and ask her point-blank what she meant by her intrusion into your house, and insinuations against your daughter."

Mr. Netherton looked blank.

"I can't get the address. Clara refuses it."

"Surely she dare not!"

Thus pressed the unfortunate visitor explained he had had a stormy scene before leaving home. Distracted by a kind of superstitious fear for his child he had spoken plainly to Clara, called the visitor a cheat and impostor, and demanded her address.

Clara replied she should not give it. Already her happiness was wrecked through Ivy's treachery.

If Mr. Netherton would undertake to send his daughter away from home until Clara was publicly engaged to Kenneth Martin he should have the address of the unknown lady, but on no other condition. Stung for once into asserting himself Mr. Netherton refused, and told his stepdaughter while she remained in his house she should not receive any visitors he did not know personally. Whereupon Clara went into a fury, and said she would leave Cranley gardens that very day; and her poor mother, worried to death between the contending parties, was so ill the doctor had to be sent for, who promptly ordered her to bed, and gave Miss Trevlyn a piece of his mind.

"Clara has gone to her friends at Hastings, and I devoutly wish she'd stay there," concluded Mr. Netherton; "and I came here to see you, for I felt if I did not tell someone my anxiety it would drive me mad! I did not mean to say a word against Clara, for, though

she's a temper, I have no doubt she would make you an excellent wife. To tell you the truth, we have hoped for days you would 'speak out,' and I think her mother and I were as much disappointed as she was, when nothing came of your long tête-à-tête last night."

"Did Ivy think that—I mean, did she believe that I was in love with her sister?"

"I cannot say. She has often checked Olive when the child was wishing you would take Clara away, and she told her once she ought not to speak as though you were engaged."

"How long will Miss Trevlyn stay away?"

"She said 'for ever,' but I have noticed that 'for ever' generally means, with Clara, until she wants a change. This is not the first time she has bidden us an eternal farewell—after the last she stayed away a fortnight, if I remember rightly. If Hastings is dull she will be back in a week."

Kenneth devoutly hoped Hastings would not be dull, and frankly said so.

"Well," observed Mr. Netherton, as he rose to go, "I married for love myself, and I always made up my mind my children should do the same; and if Ivy likes you I won't deny it's a very good match for her, but you must excuse my saying I wish with all my heart your choice had fallen on Clara."

That evening Kenneth pleaded for Ivy's love, and the girl put her hand into his, confessing he was dear to her, but there was a troubled look on her face which grieved him, and when he asked her what caused it, she whispered she was afraid—she thought Clara would be angry.

"My dear child!" cried Kenneth, fondly, "won't you trust me? Won't you believe, Ivy, that I never in my life spoke a word of love to Clara Trevlyn?"

"I never thought you cared for her," replied Ivy, gravely; "but she believed it firmly."

"Don't you see, little girl, she has no power to separate us? If Clara Trevlyn makes your home here unhappy, Ivy, it will only be a reason for your coming to me the sooner."

Ivy clings to him a little closer.

"I could not bear to give you up, now I know you love me. But oh, Kenneth! Clara will try to part us. I seem to know it—I feel it here," and the girl laid her hand upon her heart.

"My darling, I hope and think you are mistaken. Miss Trevlyn will find a richer suitor, and forget any favour she may have been disposed to show me; and, Ivy, I am sure of one thing—she never loved me. She may have thought me a suitable husband, but she never cared for me; I do not think love is in her nature."

Ivy looked up sadly.

"No—the Trevlyns never love but they can hate, and hate bitterly."

"My dear, are you not hard on them? Mrs. D'Arroy, Clara's aunt, struck me as a very kindhearted woman. I am certain she knew how to love."

"But she was not a Trevlyn; she and Clara's father were only halfbrother and sister. I have seen Mrs. D'Arroy, and I think her charming, but the real Trevlyns can't love. Look at Clara's father!"

"What did he do?"

"He married mamma against her will, just because nothing else would save her parents from starving. Then he was so jealous that he left the guardianship of her child away from her, and made a will that if she married again she should forfeit every penny of her fortune. I know that he was a cruel, hard man."

"Well, we are agreed that Clara never cared for me; and I really think, Ivy, we have nothing to fear."

Ivy sighed.

"I am frightened of Clara," she said, simply. "I daresay it is foolish, but I can't help it."

Mr. Netherton gave them his blessing with the tears in his eyes. He told Kenneth there was no one he would sooner have trusted with

his child, and that to have Ivy's future settled was a weight off his mind, but the young man saw clearly he dreaded the task of telling his stepdaughter.

From that night forward every hour of Kenneth's leisure was spent in Crawley-gardens. He rather feared Mrs. Netherton would resent his non-appreciation of Clara; but the gentle lady congratulated him very kindly on his choice.

"Ivy is a dear little thing, and will make you a good wife, Mr. Martin!"

Never by word or look did she allude to her own child; and Kenneth soon discovered that Miss Trevlyn had not descended to inform the family of her address at Hastings, and so they could not write to tell her of the engagement. It really seemed this time as though Clara's "for ever" was to be of something more than its usual length, for the days passed on, and no news came of her.

Kenneth's wedding was fixed for the first of June. Everything went blithely and cheerfully until, one afternoon in May, as he turned into his chambers for a hasty toilet before starting to spend the evening with his betrothed, a telegram was put into his hands. The sender was Claude Maitland, and it ran as follows:—

"Come at once. One found!"

Kenneth could not hesitate. Friendship, promise, and gratitude called him to Bovington. He wrote a hurried line of explanation to Ivy, and left London, eager to hear what light had been thrown on the Thornton tragedy, but yet with a strange, blank feeling of desolation at his heart for his first parting with his gentle betrothed.

CHAPTER XX.

Dr. Slott had not been mistaken when he said that at the very least, it would be a month before Mrs. Cockles' mysterious lodger recovered from her terrible illness. It was all that and more before she was convalescent; but in the meanwhile the doctor and his wife never wearied in the kindly interest they felt for her. Dr. Slott had tried to make Mrs. Cockles see her own interest, and not undertake a very anxious task; but when he found her firm he told his wife they must "see her through it," which meant that his own skill and all the nourishing food that could be required were to be at the girl's disposal.

When his wife came home and told him of the strange discovery in the trunk brought with the sick girl to Pilkington-square the doctor looked unusually grave.

"I hope Mrs. Cockles has not mentioned it to anyone?" he said, thoughtfully. "The matter ought to be kept secret until that poor girl is able to be questioned."

"Mrs. Cockles is a very prudent woman. She is going to hold her tongue. She put the things back in the box, and locked it up again. She means to ask you to keep the key. She is so afraid when the poor girl gets better she might open it suddenly, and have a shock. Dick, I wish you would tell me what you think about it. I never heard of anything so mysterious in my life."

"I think there has been foul play, Mary. Most probably that poor girl was meant never to recover from the drugs administered to her before she came to Mrs. Cockles."

"But why send those awful things in her box?"

"Because anyone having such things would be most anxious to get rid of them, and this presented a good opportunity. If she never recovered consciousness, and people did not understand that she was victim instead of sinner, the inference would be that she put those things in her box to conceal a crime she had committed."

"I am sure she is a lady."

The doctor smiled.

"Most people are ladies nowadays. I will

tell you something more. She is of gentle blood, and she comes from the country."

"No, Dick. Her ulster has the name of a London shop."

"Bought in a hurry, no doubt. She is from the country, Mary."

"How can you tell?"

He smiled.

"Because the man who brought her to Mrs. Cockles, and represented himself as her father, tried so hard to give her the appearance of a Londoner. All her outer things are new, and just such as would be worn by girls of her supposed class in London; but he forgot a few details. Her stockings are black silk. Her name is embroidered on her handkerchief in satin stitch, and her boots, though beautifully made, are not too thin for country wear. Unless I am very much mistaken the poor girl was 'someone' in a little rural village, and her enemy's scheme was to change her into one of a crowd of London toilers; but he forgot the few details I have mentioned."

"I saw her clothes, but I never noticed all that. Dick, you really ought to have been a detective."

"I should advertise at once, Mary. I believe the clue we have would be quite sufficient to lead to her identity; but till she is herself and can tell us who is friend and who is foe, I won't risk it."

"I see. You think the advertisement might only lead in restoring her to Mr. Andrews' instead of her own friends. Dick, do you think her mother is alive? It made my heart ache to hear her ask for her."

"Poor child! I should like to have the handling of that man Andrews."

"I wonder if he knows?"

"That she is alive? Of course he does, and probably hates Mrs. Cockles pretty thoroughly for her charity."

It came at last—the day those good Samaritans had so eagerly looked forward to. The invalid had safely passed the crisis, and was out of danger. The fever light had died out of her eyes, and she was conscious of what was going on around her.

"Do speak to her, sir," implored Mrs. Cockles, one morning when Dr. Slott appeared for his usual visit. "She's quite herself, and she seems scared to death."

And, indeed, the girl's face was full of terror as she turned to greet the doctor with a piteous prayer.

"Oh, sir, do send me home. Don't let him find me. Indeed, I am not mad!"

"No. Of course not," said Dr. Slott. "You are as sane as I am; but my poor child, you have been in bad hands, and had a narrow escape. Do you feel well enough this morning to tell us something of your history? It is more than a month since you were brought here, and Mrs. Cockles and I know nothing of you except that your name is 'Kitty!'"

"I'd trust her face that she's as good as she is pretty," said the landlady, kindly; "but for your own sake, missie, and the sakes of them who may be sorrowing for you all this time, I'd like to know what brought you to the pass you were in when you came here?"

"Is it really a month ago? Oh, my poor Claude! He will think me dead!"

"My dear child, whoever you wish to see shall be telegraphed for to-day. So try and tell me all that troubles you?"

Kitty Thornton looked into his face and trusted him. She began her sad little story—beginning from the night of her mother's murder.

"I suppose it was wrong," said the child, sadly; "but I felt that papa didn't feel things as I did, and I had made up my mind to leave him. I was going to meet Claude at the Vicarage that night, and I had made up my mind to ask Mrs. Bolton to let me stay with her until my brother came home."

"My dear," said Dr. Slott, kindly, "I can spare you a little of the story. The Bovington Tragedy was a nine days' wonder, and your own disappearance its chief mystery."

"Oh! tell me," pleaded Kitty, "who killed my mother? She never did it herself. I won't believe that!"

"Nor did the jury. They returned a verdict of wilful murder against some person or persons unknown. Not a single arrest has been made. Your father has gone abroad, and the matter seems likely to be added to the long list of those unpunished crimes one meets every year."

"And Vere—he was mother's darling. Oh! how did he bear it?"

Dr. Slott did not mean to enter into that part of the question, for he knew he could tell her nothing hopeful.

"If you are the missing daughter of whose disappearance such a mystery has been made shall I not telegraph to your father?"

"Oh, no! I could not bear it."

"My dear, will you tell us how you came here? We know nothing but the version published in the newspapers that you left The Sycamores one night at seven, and have never been seen since. Both the lodge-keepers swore you never passed through the gates."

"No. I had not got to the Lodge when I met a stranger. He told me he had witnessed my mother's murder, and that if I would go with him to where a dying man was waiting to make his confession, I should have ample proofs that my dear mother never took her own life. You don't know the agony it had been to me to hear the whisper she had killed herself. I believe I would have given my own life just to clear her memory, and so I went with the stranger willingly. He said the murderer was at a cottage three miles off, and he could drive me there, and then leave me at the Vicarage afterwards. He lifted me over the fence, because his carriage was waiting in the lane, and it would save so much time."

"Who was it?" demanded Dr. Slott.

"My dear, the man must have been a villain!"

"He looked very old," said Kitty, trembling. "He was dressed like a clergyman, and had a long, white beard. He stooped, and seemed very feeble. I remember thinking it was odd he could lift me so easily over the fence."

"And then?"

"I remember nothing more," said Kitty, faintly. "He helped me into the carriage, and we drove off. It was close, and smells very strong of some odd kind of scent, I thought. I remember I felt as though things were swimming round and round with me, and then all was one blank."

And she could tell them nothing more. She had a dim remembrance of a bedroom in London, and a woman standing over her and making her drink wine; but she could recall nothing plainly from the moment of oblivion in the carriage to her awaking at Mrs. Cockles.

Dr. Slott, who had a clear head and quick judgment, decided that she was probably driven to a station some distance from Bovington, and brought to London by the night mail.

She must have spent two days before coming to Pilkington-street, unless her kidnapper and Mr. Andrews were two distinct persons, since Andrews called on Mrs. Cockles the night before he brought his pretended daughter, so that he could not have been in Yorkshire under the disguise of a clergyman. On the other hand, if there were two men in the atrocious plot, Kitty might have come to Pilkington-square within a few hours of reaching London.

It was the girl herself who solved the doubt.

"I left The Sycamores on a Thursday. I cannot be mistaken, because it was the day after my mother's death."

"And you came here on a Saturday!" returned Mrs. Cockles, "so it's as plain as light there's but one man in it. Your old clergyman, missie, and the coachman Andrews is one and the same; and if I've a right to opinion I'd say it's most likely he killed your mother!"

Dr. Slott looked at her strangely. He feared she was going to refer to the trunk and



["PLEASE, SIR, A STRANGE GENTLEMAN SAYS HE'S BROUGHT MISS THORNTON HOME!" THE PARLOUR MAID SAID.]

its terrible contents, but he had misjudged her.

The widow was too careful of the girl she had nursed back from the gates of death to risk giving her such a shock.

Kitty turned to Mrs. Cockles with a faint smile.

"You have saved my life. Claude will thank you better than I can."

"My dear, I think the sooner Mr. Maitland puts a gold ring on your finger the better," said the widow, quietly. "There be good husbands as well as bad ones; and though matrimony is a venture, I think, in your case, I'd risk it. You're much too young and pretty to go roaming about the world alone."

"We can't be married," said Kitty, sadly. "My father refused his consent, and I am not of age."

"Mr. Thornton is abroad, and no one knows his address," said Dr. Slott, shrewdly. "I think, Miss Kitty, that if your banns were read in your own parish church at home Dr. Bolton could marry you to Mr. Maitland with perfect legality, provided the Squire did not appear to forbid the ceremony before it was finished."

But there came a strange, wistful look into the girl's face.

"Claude may not want me now."

"Then he's an idiot!" retorted the doctor, heartily. "But whatever makes you think so?"

"Don't you know they said my mother was mad, and insanity is sometimes hereditary."

"Nonsense?" retorted Dr. Slott. "I tell you what, Miss Thornton, we won't trust to letter or telegram! You get better, and in a day or to I'll take you down to Yorkshire myself."

"Law, sir," interposed Mrs. Cockles, "she won't be fit for that journey for weeks!"

"I think she will," replied the doctor.

He sent his wife round that very afternoon.

Mary Slott had represented to him that the

garb chosen for the rôle of a coachman's daughter was not a fitting attire for Miss Thornton to travel home in.

Mrs. Slott possessed a ready tact, and great powers of persuasion. In half-an-hour she had prevailed on Kitty to let her buy whatever she thought necessary; and the next day she insisted on taking the girl for a short drive, that she might feel the sweet spring sunshine, and then Kitty opened her heart to this new friend, and confessed how much she dreaded going home.

"It never can seem like home again without mother; and, you know, everyone at Bovington believes me dead! It will be just as though I had come back from the grave."

"Think of Mr. Maitland," said Mary, cheerfully. "You must be very hard-hearted if you wish to keep him longer in suspense."

"I don't want him to marry me out of pity, just because he thinks I have no one to take care of me."

"He shall not do that," promised Mary, reassuringly. "You are one of Dick's pet patients, and I will give him strict injunctions to bring you back to me if Mr. Maitland does not seem fully to appreciate you."

Kitty gave her hand an affectionate squeeze.

"How good you are to me!"

"Dear, I venture to prophecy you won't come back, but if you do, I will make you very welcome. My heart went out to you, Kitty, when I saw you first tossing in the terrors of fever, and calling for your mother. I never read or heard a story so strange as yours; but I do hope now the dark clouds will roll away, and happiness return to you."

Kitty's eyes were full of tears.

"It all began with Miss Bovington's death. I never had a trouble in my life until papa quarrelled with Claude about her will, and forbid him the house."

"When was that?"

"Not six months ago. But troubles have

come thick and fast since. First, Marguerite Bovington was quartered on us, then my dear mother was killed, and I was lured away the very day after."

"Cheer up, Kitty! I fancy Mr. Maitland will be too delighted to see you to scold you. But, really, dear, you don't pay him a compliment by doubting his love."

Two days afterwards when Claude, who was a favorite guest at the Vicarage, sat at dinner with the Boltons, the parlour-maid entered with a perplexed face.

"Please, sir, there's a strange gentleman. He says he's brought Miss Thornton home, and—"

The sentence was never finished. The three seated at the table rushed into the hall.

Claude took his darling in his arms and gathered her to his heart in a passionate embrace. The Vicar and his wife, after wringing Dr. Slott's hand till it fairly ached, dragged him into the dining-room and insisted on his sharing their repast.

The next day the telegram was dispatched to Kenneth, for Dr. Slott had brought down with him the leather trunk whose terrible contents Kitty had never even suspected, and it was thought desirable that the barrister should be present at the opening. As to Miss Thornton's future, the Vicar improved on Dr. Slott's suggestion, and advised a special license, as no one could answer for the Squire's movements, and any day might bring him home, when his caprice would again part Claude and his lady love.

(To be continued.)

"TREE MOSS" is the latest substance adopted by horse collar-makers to stuff their collars with. It should be stated, however, that it is a peculiar sort of moss found only in the Southern States of America, which has been long used for mattresses, &c.



[ADRIEL SAW A MOST PERFECT VISION OF BEAUTY BEFORE HER.]

NOVELETTE.]

CHILD ADRIEL.

CHAPTER I.

"I REALLY see no reason why Adriel should not go," said Miss Aurora Vinter. "After all, they are her mother's people, and the visit need not be an expensive one. Of course the child must have one or two new gowns, but I think we are able to afford those without pinching."

"If she goes," Miss Biddy remarked, almost in tears, "she will come back to us wholly spoiled for our quiet life—that is, if she ever returns at all, for of course some man will fall in love with her pretty face, and steal her heart from us."

Miss Aurora leaned forward, and, laying one hand upon her sister's, said,—

"Aren't you doubting the child's goodness and love when you speak so? And do you know, Biddy dear, I would be glad to see her safe in some kind man's keeping. She will be all alone when we are gone; and have we found single blessedness so very alluring?"

The plain, kind face was full of sisterly compassion as she spoke, and Biddy, who was always the most impulsive of the two, threw her arms about her sister's neck, crying,—

"I am a selfish old woman, as well as a foolish one. Let it be as you wish, Aurora, but all the sunshine will go out of the house with Adriel."

"But if it is for her happiness you will gladly live in the shade awhile?"

"Yes, sister, yes; we will think of her first. Heaven bless her!"

"Very well, dear. It now remains for us to tell her what this letter contains," laying one shapely hand upon an envelope adorned with a coronet. "I wonder how she will take the news?"

And then both sisters sat silent awhile, each busy with her own thoughts, and the only sound in the room was the clicking of their needles, as they knitted as though for dear life.

They were homely-looking women, although they bore the stamp of good birth. They never could have been pretty, even in early youth; but their hearts were hearts of gold, and a man might well have esteemed himself fortunate to have won either sister.

But men mostly prefer the glittering dross to the pure metal, and so it came about no man had ever sought them, ever cared to linger by their side, to whisper pretty nothings or ardent love-vows in the tender gleaming.

Miss Aurora was now forty, Biddy thirty-eight, whilst their father, had he lived until the opening of our story, would have been sixty-five. The professor's wife had been dead years and years before he contracted his second marriage with the almost penniless Miss Sandilands, to the great surprise and anger of her family. The lady was a belle, beautiful, amiable, young; but she preferred the elderly professor to all her admirers, and from the day of her marriage, her mother, Lady Sandilands, never saw or spoke with her again. But the Professor's daughter's, young women then, but still a little older than his bride, took her into their warm hearts, loved her, made much of her, and for twelve, short, happy months, Gertrude Vinter lived in Paradise.

Then her baby was born, and its birth cost the young mother her life. The Professor did not long survive his darling.

But the little one never missed a mother's care, or a mother's love, her step-sisters being passionately devoted to her. And as she grew up they lavished upon her all the pent-up love and tenderness of their true, womanly hearts.

Adriel was eighteen now, and in all her little life Lady Sandilands had taken no

notice of her grandchild; then, whether it was because some acquaintance had seen and remarked on the girl's pretty face, or that she was growing old, and the cruel treatment that she had accorded her daughter weighed heavily upon her conscience, she wrote, inviting the girl to spend the ensuing season with her, promising to advance her interests in every way.

"And we both know what that means," poor Biddy had said, bitterly. "She will try to make our darling as selfish and worldly as herself, and compel her to marry money, and not for love. How dare she write us, after these long years of silence?"

And although in the end she yielded to Aurora's persuasions, in secret she fumed and fretted over Lady Sandilands's audacity; and so far as her gentle nature would permit, hated her for her old enmity towards the dear, dead father, and her cruel avoidance of his pretty young bride.

The eldest Miss Sandilands had been a woman after her mother's own heart, and had done her duty by marrying a wealthy railway contractor, whom, privately, she detested.

She, too, had long been dead; she, too, had left an only daughter, who, when her father joined the great majority, found herself one of the greatest heiresses in society.

She resided with her grandmother, and was the only creature in the world who dared run counter to Lady Sandilands's wishes and commands. At twenty, Vera Garland was a handsome, imperious, wilful woman, with many a lover sighing at her feet, but as yet, she would have none of them.

"I hope," said Miss Biddy, after a long silence, during which she had thought of all these things, "I hope Miss Garland is nice, so that she will be a pleasant companion for Adriel; but I am afraid heiresses are likely to be spoiled by flattery."

"Biddy," said her sister, "it appears to me you are bent upon taking a dark view of

everything to-day; and it is neither right nor kind."

The rebuke was uttered in the mildest of tones, and accompanied by the most affectionate expression, but it quite subdued Biddy.

"I am a nasty, disagreeable, uncharitable woman," she began, and then, by common consent, they were silent as a sweet, high voice clef the air,—

"Alone in the garden I cry in my pain,
Oh, bloom again, roses; oh, love, come again!"

And then in the doorway appeared a slim, white-robed figure, with hands flower-filled; and the sweet, sad song died out as the dark eyes rested on the troubled faces of the spinster sisters.

The girl came hurriedly forward, and tossing her flowers upon the table said, imperiously,—

"What has happened? What has gone awry? You may as well confess at once, because evasion is useless with me," and seating herself upon the edge of the table she waited for Aurora to speak.

"Nothing is wrong, dear child," the eldest sister said; "rather something pleasant has happened. Lady Sandilands has written inviting you to spend the season at Palace-gardens with herself and your cousin, Miss Garland."

Adriel's fair young face darkened, and the level brows contracted.

"She might have spared herself the trouble," she said, quickly. "I am not going. I wonder she is not ashamed to suggest such a thing after all these years!"

Biddy smiled approvingly; but Aurora, who was intent upon doing what she believed her duty, remarked,—

"I think you ought to go, Adriel. Lady Sandilands is an old woman, and her wishes should be studied as far as possible. Then, too, you are her own grandchild."

"I'm not proud of the relationship!" retorted Adriel, for she was a young lady of considerable character, "and I don't choose to acknowledge it. Consider the subject closed, Aurora."

Here Biddy so far forgot herself as to faintly clap her hands in approval of Adriel's sentiments, but Miss Vinter said, quickly,—

"For shame, Biddy! You should not encourage the child in her rebellion. Come, sit beside me, Adriel."

"And listen awhile to reason?" sang the girl, defiantly; but she sank into a seat beside Aurora, and put an arm about her square waist.

"Yes, I want you to be both reasonable and obedient. It is my wish you should join Lady Sandilands as soon as possible."

"That is a very polite way of saying you are tired of me at last," Adriel answered, swiftly. "I'd be open and tell the truth, and nothing but the truth, were I you!"

Then seeing Aurora's pained look she relented and impetuously throwing her arms about her neck kissed her right heartily.

"I didn't mean it, dear! I didn't mean it! But I don't want to leave you, and I won't. No, not for fifty grandmothers!"

Here Miss Biddy again murmured her approval, and was again suppressed.

"I think, dear," said her sister, "you forget that it is your mother's mother who asks this thing of you, and she is entitled to some consideration from you."

"I fail to see that. She despised and ignored my father. She treated my mother shamefully, and ever since I was born she has systematically avoided you—yes, my own dear sisters, the best and dearest women in the world. Give me her letter."

Biddy passed the offending note to her, and with heightening colour and curving lip Adriel read aloud, in a drawing tone,—

"Lady Sandilands presents her compliments to the Misses Vinter, and begs that they will allow their young sister to spend the remainder of the season at Palace-gardens. Lady Sandilands ventures to say that Miss

Adriel Vinter will derive benefit from such a visit, and that the society of her cousin, Miss Garland, will greatly aid in perfecting her in all the little details of a lady's education. Lady Sandilands will be obliged by an early reply."

"I shall not go," Adriel said again, as she tossed the note aside, "so you may write her ladyship to that effect, Aurora."

"My dear, you are young and impetuous, and just now being sheltered by our love, and happy in our simple home, you are content. But you would not always be so. You are cleverer and brighter than we are, and you want a fuller life."

"I don't want anything you are not to share, you darling!"

"But think, Adriel, child, we are so many years older than you. In the course of nature we must die first."

"Fiddlesticks and frying-pan! You always talk of yourselves as old women, and I won't allow it. Why, you are not much older than mamma would be if she had lived, and I never can think of her but as young and fair."

"She was both, dear, and she died in the flush of youth and joy. Dear, I think Biddy and I have always striven to teach you love and reverence for your dear mother, to live as she would wish—"

"Oh, indeed, and indeed you have!" the girl interrupted.

"Well, then, let me tell you this. I am quite, quite sure that were she now living she would say, 'Go to my mother, forget and forgive the past.' She was never sore or angry against Lady Sandilands or Mrs. Garland. She never said one evil or bitter word of them, although I am quite certain their coldness clouded her otherwise bloodless life. And when she lay dying, she said, 'I hope, one day, mamma will give baby the love she never gave to me, and that my little girl will be her greatest comfort and support.'"

Adriel sat with downcast eyes; her face was flushed and her lips quivered a little, but she did not speak, only it was evident to Biddy that she was gradually yielding to Aurora's eloquence.

"And even with her last breath, as she committed you to your father's care, she said, 'Jasper, if ever my mother wishes to see the child, you will not refuse her that request?' and he answered, 'No.' Now, my darling, what will you do?"

The girl rose, and, walking to a window, stood looking out through a mist of tears. Presently she said, chokingly,—

"I will go; but it is under protest, and I will revenge myself by hating my grandmother with all my heart. There, you need not begin to scold, Aurora, for on this subject I will not be scolded; and I'll be as disagreeable as the days are long, when once I am at Palace-gardens," and with that she rushed upstairs, and in her own room indulged in a stormy burst of tears.

She had hardly regained her calmness when Biddy appeared, and sitting mournfully on the bedside, began her dolorous complaint.

"I wish you were not going, Adriel. You'll never be quite the same to us. Your fine relations will teach you to despise us as they do!"

"If you say another word like that," cried Adriel, hotly, "I'll never forgive you, and I vow I won't go, even if Aurora tries to drag me there! Despise you! Oh, you old stupid!"

"Yes," says Biddy, meekly, "I know I am stupid, I always was; but in worldly matters I am wiser than you" (the good soul was as ignorant of such things as a baby).

"And there is another danger for you, of which Aurora, with all her wisdom, is quite careless."

"And that?" questioned Adriel, languidly.

"You are sure to have lovers, and with only Lady Sandilands to guide your choice I am afraid you may choose wrongly."

Despite her recent tears and present anxiety the girl laughed merrily.

"If I am so unlucky as to have lovers I'll know how to treat them," she said, lightly. "I mean to live and die an old maid."

"Ah, dear, you'll not say so always. Love is often a curse, but more often a blessing, and an old maid's life is but a sad thing at best."

Adriel sat up, and stared at her with wide eyes.

"Biddy," she said, solemnly, "tell me the truth. Was there anyone you ever loved better than Aurora or me?"

Biddy's pallid face flushed crimson, but she said, bravely,—

"Yes."

"And he died? Oh, my poor Biddy!" with genuine pity.

"No, dear; he married somebody else. He never knew or cared to know that I loved him. I don't believe he ever gave me a thought. I was always so plain and stupid," pathetically, "though I think I could love more truly, more fondly, than many a pretty and clever woman."

"Poor Biddy! poor Biddy! and he—the man you loved" (lowering her voice) "must have been blind to prefer any other woman to you. Why, you dear, you dear, every night, when I say my prayers, I thank Heaven for my two good and lovely sisters—for you are good—and to me you will always be lovely," and a hearty kiss sealed the truth of the girl's words.

CHAPTER II.

DISPITE her very pronounced objection to the proposed visit Adriel was too thoroughly human not to take a very hearty interest in the pretty new gowns her sisters provided.

There was a white ganzy one for evening wear, with crimson ribbons and a dainty white fan, on which Miss Aurora, who was clever with her brush, had painted a cluster of crimson roses. Then there was a neat grey costume for walking, and a pale pink tea-gown.

The sisters were not rich, and Adriel knew they were denying themselves many things so that she, their darling, might go bravely dressed, and in her passionate gratitude hung about them half crying and wholly loving.

All her modest wardrobe was overhauled and renovated, and at the close of a fortnight Adriel was declared ready for her journey.

"My dear," Biddy said, "don't ask me to go to the station with you. I'd be sure to make a spectacle of myself. I am not so strong-minded as Aurora."

So the girl kissed and embraced her in the little hall, and mingled her tears with poor Biddy's. She had never left home before, never slept under any other roof, and this parting, for a few weeks only, was an awful wrench.

"Are you ready?" Miss Aurora asked, with a fine assumption of severity. "For shame, Biddy, so to upset her. Come, Adriel."

"Good-bye, dear Biddy, I'll write you every day—and—and—oh! I wish I were not going!" and then Aurora hurried her away and into the hired fly, with its wretched apology for a horse.

Miss Vinter bore herself bravely whilst she took Adriel's ticket, and looked after the safe disposal of her luggage. She even gave no sign of emotion as she kissed the girl, and saw her comfortably settled in her compartment. But when the bell rang, and all the passengers came rushing up the platform, her lips twitched ominously, and her eyes filled with sudden, irrepressible tears.

"Good-bye, Adriel," she sobbed. "Do not forget us!"

And when the train steamed out of the station the poor, lonely old maid stood watching it, wholly unconscious that tears were streaming down her faded cheeks. And when she could see it no longer, she turned away, weeping sorely and quite unaware that she

was affording amusement to a porter and two giddy girls.

It seemed to her all the light and joy had gone out of her life with "child Adriel's" going—that she never could be glad or content again.

Poor old maids! They had no one else to love. She was their pride and delight, "and we have lost her," sobbed Biddy, clinging to Aurora, and Aurora had never a word to say.

That night, hand-in-hand, they stood beside Adriel's bed and spoke of her in lowered tones as one speaks of those who have gone before; and every day they placed fresh flowers upon her table, and carefully tended the plants in her window box. They even offered up their simple, heartfelt petitions kneeling by her bed, and "child Adriel's" room became a sacred place to them.

It was ridiculous, of course, but it was infinitely pathetic.

My heart yearns over those two gray, lonely, simple women, living out their dull, neutral-tinted lives, and pining for the sight of their darling's bright face and soft, dark eyes, the sound of her happy laughter.

Throughout her tedious journey Adriel never shed a tear. She was going to relatives she had reason to believe were hard and unsympathetic, and was too proud to show them all what this parting from home meant for her.

A bright flush burned on either cheek, and her lips were set hard to keep back the sobs that were so fain to break from them.

A handsomely-appointed carriage awaited her, and a dignified footman led the way to it; but neither her grandmother nor cousin had thought it necessary to meet her, and her heart grew harder yet against them.

The drive from the station was a short one, and on alighting another pompous servant ushered her into Lady Sandilands' presence.

She was already dressed for dinner, looking very handsome in a rich cap of Spanish lace, a black moiré velvet gown trimmed with jet and lace, with a train of black moiré lined with grey.

Casting one swift, scrutinising glance at the girl she rose, and stooping over her kissed her brow, saying in a voice slightly shaken by some repressed emotion,—

"You are like your mother. She was a beautiful girl. I hope your visit will be a pleasant one. Dart, my maid, shall attend to you this evening. To-morrow we will make some other arrangement for your comfort."

"I am unaccustomed to a maid, Lady Sandilands," said the girl.

"You must not call me that. I am your grandmother!"

"But you forgot that fact so long that I have forgotten it too," Adriel answered, feeling very rebellious and angry.

Just for a moment her ladyship looked affronted, then her handsome face softened, and laying one still beautiful hand upon the girl's shoulder, she said,—

"Let bygones be bygones, Adriel; and for your mother's sake try to forget all that seems cruel in my past conduct, and remember that I had my child's interests at heart when I acted as I did. There, I will say no more. Perhaps, when you know me well you will like me better; but I must insist that you give me my proper title. Yes, Dart, Miss Vinter is ready for you;" and with that she dismissed the half-repentant, half-angry girl from her presence.

Dart, who was an artiste in her way, was delighted with her new subject. Here was proper material upon which to work, she thought, as she plaited the luxuriant chestnut hair, and coiled it about the small shapely head.

How pretty the girl was! What soft, kind eyes she had! And then she spoke so gently and was so considerate, so wishful to save the already wearied maid any unnecessary trouble.

And when all was finished Adriel felt an innocent, girlish delight in her own appearance. She had never been so bravely dressed, and

she had yet to learn how very simple her toilet would appear in her grandmother's fashionable circle.

Dart conducted her to the drawing-room, where Lady Sandilands was still alone. But before either could exchange a word the rustling of silken garments was heard, and, turning swiftly, Adriel saw the most perfect vision of beauty before her—a girl of some twenty years, tall, and magnificently proportioned, with a beautiful dark face, and great black eyes.

One splendid diamond star blazed in the masses of raven hair, and round her throat and wrists; at her breast the same precious stones cast out a hundred flashing lights.

She wore a gown of yellow tulle, trimmed with roses and lilies of the valley. On her left shoulder was fastened a white brocaded train, embroidered with deep gold roses.

A faint sweet smile parted the perfect lips as she saw Adriel; and, advancing with languid grace, she took the girl's hands in hers, and kissed her on either cheek.

"Of course you are Adriel, and I am your cousin, Vera Garland. I am sure we shall be very good friends."

And Adriel, who had never had a girl companion, felt her heart warm towards this beautiful slow-speaking woman with the sweet, subtle smile and haunting eyes.

She had come prepared to dislike her; but now felt all her old prejudices melting into thin air under the glamour of Vera's smile and gracious manner.

She did not know or guess that Miss Garland's insatiable love of power led her to strive for the conquest of all hearts, be they ever so humble. That she could be "all things to all men"—that she never rested until she had brought her admirers to her feet.

So Adriel smiled, and allowed herself to be made much of, unconscious that the look in her eyes, the tone of her voice, showed plainly the admiration she felt for her new friend. Such homage was as incense to Vera, because it was so thoroughly genuine.

Presently the guests began to arrive, and first amongst them came Lyon Castellain, the greatest "catch" of the season.

He was young, handsome, proud. Of pure life and name, the sole possessor of a lovely estate in Dorsetshire, and a rent-roll of ten thousand per annum. Folks said that it was more than probable he would marry Miss Garland; and one impetuous peer remarked, drawingly, "By Gad! 'tis a shame two such colossal fortunes should be united!"—a sentiment with which his friends heartily concurred.

But if Lyon had any intention of wooing Vera he had as yet given no sign. He liked and admired her as an agreeable and beautiful woman, but he went no further. It was gall and wormwood to the proud beauty to find him insensible to her charms. He was the one man who had ever touched her heart or her fancy.

But she had no fear of rivalry from her little country cousin; and as the young man joined them, said, with her slow, sweet smile,—

"I am glad you are early, Mr. Castellain, I want to introduce you to my cousin, Miss Adriel Vinter, Professor Vinter's daughter."

The blushing innocent face was very pleasant to look upon, and so Lyon seemed to think, and he was very well content that the honour of taking her in to dinner devolved upon him.

"How is it," he said, as he leaned towards her, "that I have never seen you before? I am such a constant visitor here."

"I have never been from home until now," she answered, lifting shy eyes to the handsome proud face. "I did not in the least like coming; but Aurora said it was my duty."

"I hope it will prove your pleasure too; but—am I too inquisitive? If so, snub me. Who is Aurora?"

"Oh, I forgot you did not know. Aurora is

one of my sisters, the eldest; Biddy is the other."

He looked puzzled.

"But I thought Lady Sandilands said you were her daughter's only child?" he remarked.

"Yes, that is true; but papa had been married before, years and years before, so that my half-sisters are a great deal older than myself. I say sometimes I am very lucky, because I have two mothers," she ended with a little low laugh.

"Then they are very good to you?" interrogatively.

"Oh, more than good," warmly. "I am always their first thought. You don't know how many things they have denied themselves that I should have this holiday. We aren't rich. Indeed, I believe I have nothing of my own, that Aurora and Biddy support me entirely. Their mother had a little property."

What a very simple, unaffected creature she was! How many girls in society would make such a frank confession of poverty? How many would be so little troubled by it?

Lyon found himself smiling down upon her, and thinking a trifle sadly that she would not be quite the innocent, guileless girl she now was at the close of the season.

"From what you said awhile ago, I infer you came to town against your will? Don't you like pleasure?"

"Oh yes, when I share it with my sisters; but I did not know grandma, and—and—well, I haven't forgiven her yet for her cruelty to my mother."

"I believe Lady Sandilands has suffered much from remorse," Lyon said, gravely, "and her daughter's marriage was a great disappointment to her."

"It should not have been," retorted the young judge, severely. "All who knew papa say he was one of the noblest and cleverest of men, and that he made mamma very happy. I am proud of him. Why, he was the first wrangler of his year, and held ever so many scholarships in succession, and there is no end to the stories of his generosity."

"I should have liked to have known him."

"Thank you, Mr. Castellain; but I ought not to talk so much of myself and my belongings."

"The subject is an interesting one—to me, at least. Pray continue."

"Ah, no!" laughing merrily. "I must not make you think me an egotist. Mr. Castellain, is not my cousin beautiful?"

"Very! She reminds me of some lovely tropical bird."

"I think we shall be great friends; she is so very kind. Until we met I felt so lonely and wretched, but she placed me at my ease at once; but—but I do wish I could have my sisters here," and a shadow crossed the brightness of her face.

"You must persuade them to join you."

"I don't believe grandma would wish that, and I am quite sure they would never be induced to leave home. They have lived all their lives at Stanbury."

Here Lady Sandilands gave the signal to rise, and Adriel followed with the other ladies, Vera joining her at once.

"Mr. Castellain and you seemed mutually pleased with each other?" she said, smiling down at the young, sweet face.

"He is very kind and nice," the girl answered, simply.

"I shall have to tell him that. He will be pleased to hear your good opinion. Now, I want you to sing to us."

"No, not to-night, or any night, Vera. I am a very ordinary performer, and I am quite sure my voice would not nearly fill this huge room. But I will be glad to hear you. I should think you sing beautifully. You look as though you would."

Vera laughed good-humouredly, pleased by the girl's speech, for she really possessed a magnificent contralto. If only Lyon Castellain did not evince too great a partiality for the

country cousin, she was quite disposed to make much of her.

She had an opportunity of asking his opinion of Adriel later in the evening.

"Well, what is your judgment of Miss Vinter?" she asked, in her slow, sweet tones. "She is the frankest little soul I have ever met."

"Yes; is she not? I am so glad we agree upon that."

CHAPTER III.

"MY DEAR," said Lady Sandilands' confidential friend, a few days later, "your grandchild is quite a success. I never saw anything more charming in its way than her simplicity and candour."

"Yes, she is simple without being stupid," answered the other, "and I am proud of her. I hope she will do better than her mother. But if one spoke of love or lovers to her she would be startled beyond measure. Her sisters seem to have regarded her quite as a child."

"And a charming child she is! You are fortunate in having two such girls to chaperone. Vera, of course, takes the palm for beauty, but many men prefer Adriel's less brilliant style. Only last night young Mortlock, a very eligible parti, said in my hearing, 'By Jove! that little girl in white is just the sort to make a man's home a Paradise; a winsome, gentle, coaxing witch. If I see her often I shall lose my head over her.'"

Lady Sandilands smiled complacently, then sighed, for not all her kindness, and she was kind to her, could win child Adriel's heart, or teach her to forget the fair young mother, whose last hours had been embittered by her ladyship's stern refusal to see her.

She was obedient and anxious to please; but the grandmother's keen eyes saw that this was from a sense of duty, and that affection did not prompt those delicate little attentions which were so pleasant to receive.

Then, too, Lady Sandilands could not compel herself to talk of the simple stepdaughters, living so quietly at that far-away small town. She even showed faint displeasure if Adriel spoke of them in her presence.

So it came about that the girl made a *confidante* of Vera, who encouraged her to talk of the home life, and never seemed weary of listening to stories of Aurora's goodness and Biddy's perfections; and Adriel soon learned to love her beautiful cousin next to her sisters.

"One day," said Vera, in her sweet languid tones, "you and I will go together to Stanbury, so that I may make acquaintance with the Misses Vinter. I only hope they will like me as much as I am prepared to like them. Indeed, I look upon them already as my cousins."

"Dear Vera," answered Adriel, affectionately, "they will love you because you have been so good to me!"

"Nonsense," said Vera; "you are grateful for nothing. Now, what are you going to do? Why are you running away?"

"I must write my home letter. Aurora and Biddy would think I was ill if I neglected to do so, and they would be sick with anxiety from post to post. I believe they would telegraph to know the reason for my silence."

"I positively believe you write every other day!"

"I do, and when I can snatch a moment I run up and add a line or two to my letter until it is time to send it off; so that it grows into a kind of journal, and they know what I am doing from hour to hour. That seems to shorten the distance between us; for oh! I do miss them, much as I am enjoying myself, much as I care for you."

And when she was gone, Miss Garland sat with a thoughtful look upon her beautiful face, an almost sombre expression in her deep dark eyes. But she rose presently with an impatient gesture.

"I am stupid to fancy such a thing! What man would give the preference to her when I

was near? She is pretty, but—" and an expressive glance in the opposite mirror rounded the sentence completely.

Adriel's letter was finished and posted by her own hands. She never entrusted one of those bulky epistles to any of the servants.

"They might forget," she said, "and I won't have my sisters think I am careless of them."

She knew as well as though she had been there to see them, how, three mornings in the week, the sisters would stand watching behind the parlour curtains for the advent of the old postman; and if eight o'clock brought no news long, long before the second post came in they would be waiting with anxious eyes and beating hearts for a line from their darling.

How could she disappoint them? There were only two posts at Stanbury, the one at eight A.M., the other at two P.M.; and she never missed the first if she could possibly help it.

She told them all about her lovely cousin, until her simple sisters loved Vera almost as well as Adriel did. She hid nothing from them save her frequent meetings with Lyon Castellain and his continuous kindness.

Perhaps she was hardly conscious of suppressing these things; but after her first meeting with him she had never mentioned his name, and Aurora hoped that "child Adriel" would return to them loverless; but Biddy was indignant that men should be so blind to the little one's charms.

Small as their knowledge was of Lyon Castellain he knew all that Adriel could tell of them, save Biddy's sad little love story; they almost seemed personal friends of his, the girl described them so faithfully and lovingly. He knew, too, how simple was their mode of life, how unpretentious their home, for Adriel had sketched the cottage, and shown her work to him.

He was a proud man, but not in the ordinary sense of the word. He was proud of his integrity, his stainless honour, his ancient name, but he did not exalt himself because of his riches or his position. They were pleasant accidents he would say laughingly, and he would choose his wife as he listed, only insisting that she should be a lady and a good woman. He cared nothing about her possessions. She might be the veriest pauper in the world so that she satisfied him in other things, and loved him before and beyond all.

He saw Adriel, and she charmed him. She fulfilled all his conditions; and by-and-by he came to love her with the one love of his life—the love that was to embitter all his after years, and to break that gentle, guileless heart so freely given into his keeping.

"I used to think, Vera," said her grandmother one morning, when Adriel was engaged with her "home" letter, "I really used to think that Lyon Castellain admired you, and intended asking you the momentous question; but it appears I was mistaken. He is devoted to Adriel."

Miss Garland yawned.

"We were never anything more than friends, and Adriel is a dear little thing. I wonder how we existed so long without her. It will be an excellent match for her."

"Yes; and I should like to see her well settled. She will have next to nothing when her sisters die; and as for you, Vera, you can well afford to marry a poor man. The Earl of Elster is only waiting an opportunity to propose. His family is as old as the hills; he is young, fairly good-looking—"

"And as stupid as he possibly can be. My dear grandmamma, don't be in so great a hurry to rid yourself of me—and don't set your affections upon a title. In all probability, I shall marry a commoner." And then she laughed a little, as she stooped and kissed the woman who had spoiled and petted her all her youth upwards. "I am very happy with you. Let us remain as we are for a little while."

And Lady Sandilands returned the kiss with fervour, saying,—

"I wish that Adriel could love me as you do. I should be a happy woman then." "You could hardly hope for that, remembering her past associations; and no doubt those dear old maids, good and gentle as they are, do not feel too kindly disposed towards you. Then, too, Adriel has known you only a few weeks, I all my life long."

Lady Sandilands sighed. She was growing old, and many things in her past life troubled her. She wished now, as she had never wished before, that she had forgiven her hapless daughter, and taken her child earlier into her home and heart.

"But in time she must love me," she thought, "if I am very patient and gentle with her. She has her mother's nature, and Gertrude was never hard or unforgiving."

The days and weeks flew by, and Lyon Castellain was a constant visitor at Palace gardens.

At first Vera tried to believe she was the attraction, but she could not long blind herself to the fact that Adriel, her simple little cousin, had won the prize she longed for.

But she gave no sign of the bitter pain and humiliation she suffered. She bore herself just as proudly to the world, just as affectionately towards her unconscious rival.

No one guessed what she suffered, no one dreamt what a madness of anger and hate possessed her.

"I loved him first," she thought, bitterly. "Shall she steal him away? Shall he be the only man to resist me when I choose to woo? She shall not have him. I love him! I love him! I love him! and he only can make me a good woman. I will not give him to her!"

Still Lyon came and went; and one day, to his great satisfaction, he found Adriel alone. She was fatigued by the previous night's pleasure; and as she had a somewhat important engagement for the following evening, Lady Sandilands had wisely determined she should not accompany herself and Vera on their shopping expedition.

The girl rose quickly from her couch as Lyon was announced, and her face flashed warmly.

"I do not know if I ought to receive you, Mr. Castellain," she said, in confusion. "Grandmamma and Vera are out. If I were at home it would be different!"

"As how?" he questioned, smiling down upon her.

"Oh, we are not ceremonious people, and all who call have a claim upon our hospitality."

"Yours must be a delightful house to visit; but I think I may safely assure you Lady Sandilands will not be angry when you tell her I stayed to enliven your solitude. I am a favourite with her."

"I know, and you ought to be proud. Grandmamma has so few favourites," said Adriel, seating herself at a distance from him. But this arrangement did not please him, and he coolly walked to her side, sinking into a chair which was placed so nicely that he could see every varying shade and light upon her face.

"You did not expect me to sustain conversation at such an enormous distance from you, did you?" he asked, quietly.

"Were you so very far away?" she answered with averted face. "Your voice sounded quite distinctly, and every word you uttered was audible."

"Shall I return to my old position? I will if you have the heart to banish me, but it is like being at the Antipodes! May I stay?"

She hesitated, blushed, toyed with the lace on her gown, then said, with what she hoped was a fine assumption of ease,—

"Of course, Mr. Castellain, you will please yourself; grandmamma likes her guests to study their own wishes."

"Then I shall remain here," promptly. "I would not miss one moment of this good time, because it will end so soon. Miss

Winter, what are you going to do when the season closes?"

"I shall return to Stanbury and my sisters."

"I hope not; I want to prevail upon Lady Sandilands and your cousin to bring you down to my place. It is just at its best now."

"I have been so long from home already," Adriel said, uncertainly, because all her heart cried out to be near him, to obey his lightest wish. "I should not be justified in accepting your invitation. They—my sisters—have missed me so sorely, and I want to see them too."

"So do I! Won't you understand that I wish them to swell our little party, that for your sake I am anxious they should know and approve me. Adriel, will you come as my promised wife? Darling, I love you, and I am vain enough to hope you care for me a little. Is it so?"

She was trembling greatly, but she controlled herself sufficiently to say,—

"Are you quite, quite sure you mean this; and that you will never be ashamed of Aurora and Biddy, because they are not rich or grand? That you will never be sorry, because I am simple and poor?"

He held out his hands to her,—

"Your people shall be my people. If you love me lay your hands in mine, and Heaven knows you shall never regret so doing."

With a swift, impulsive movement, the girl obeyed, only to find herself drawn into a close embrace, to hear that dear voice say,—

"You do love me, little one. Tell me it over and over again; it seems too good to be true. Adriel, you really mean you have given yourself to me?"

The lovely limpid eyes met his. They were full of love and trust. In the years that were to follow he would remember the expression they wore in this hour, and wonder, with an awful heartache and remorse, how he could ever have doubted the tale they told.

"You have never cared for any but me?" he asked, jealously.

"Oh, no!" she whispered. "Don't you understand Lyon, how one soul can have but one love? Ah, how shall I tell them at home. They will be grieved to learn how soon a stranger could supplant them. I cannot bear to think how they will grieve."

"Your sisters shall share our home," Lyon said, with all the generosity of a newly-declared lover. "I would not separate you for worlds; and already I have a personal affection for those who have made you what you are, only I feel absurdly inclined to think of them as maiden aunts, not sisters, the disparity in your ages is so great. As for acquainting them with the news that shall be my proud duty; and I suppose I must see Lady Sandilands too. Etiquette should have led me first to her, but I am afraid I prefer to act in an unconventional style."

And then he held her a little from him that he might the better see her face—that downcast, blushing, happy face, which he was to remember all through his life, which would rise to reproach him at all seasons. Alas! alas! that this should be!

But now, as he drew her near again, there was no premonition of woe with him. He loved her, and she was his very own. And as he stooped to kiss her tremulous, happy lips of her own free will, she laid her arms about his neck, and said, under her breath,—

"Oh, my dear! Oh, my dear! I love you with all my life!" And then she wept a little, as one whose heart is weighed down with its burden of happiness.

When Lady Sandilands and Vera returned Lyon was gone; and a servant informed the former that Miss Vinter was in her room, whither she had retired with that convenient malady—a headache.

The fact was Adriel could not confront her relatives in the first flush of her joy lest she should betray herself.

CHAPTER IV.

LADY SANDILANDS was delighted with the match.

"It is just as it should be," she said to Vera. "Adriel could not afford to marry a poor man. I am very proud of her success!"

Miss Garland was standing looking out of a window, and the expression of her face was hidden from her grandmother's keen eyes. From the tone of her voice as she replied one could guess nothing—it was so quiet, so unshaken.

"Adriel is very fortunate. I am half inclined to be envious. The child is a general favourite. I suppose I ought to congratulate her. I have not done so yet;" and just at that moment the girl entered.

Her engagement was only twenty-four hours' old, but already Lyon's ring sparkled and flashed upon one slender finger. It was the more conspicuous, because, until now, Adriel's hands had been guiltless of ornaments.

Vera, turning quickly, caught the flash of diamonds, saw the happy, smiling face, and went forward with that slow, gliding step peculiar to her.

"You most lucky of girls!" she said, gaily.

"I give you my best wishes, and hope you will be as happy as love and wealth can make you!" and then she kissed the innocent lips, and touched the bright hair caressingly. "I have been telling grandmamma I almost envy you. Lyon Castelain is such a 'knightly man and true!'"

"Thank you, Vera," Adriel said, simply. "I knew you would be glad to hear of my great happiness. Oh! what a very lucky girl I am to find so many to love me!" and she clung affectionately to the stately beauty. "I never knew how good it was to have a girl-friend until I met you, dear cousin. Grandmamma, you will not forbid Vera to spend a few days at Stanbury with me?"

"No!" said Lady Sandilands; and she half hoped Adriel would include her in the invitation (it was curious how tender she was growing towards the child); but Adriel never dreamed of doing so, fully believing she would meet with a flat refusal.

That night, when Lyon was gone, her ladyship called Adriel to her side.

"Sit here, by me, child; I want to talk to you. You are very, very happy, and your happiness should make you compassionate and tender towards an old and lonely woman. For your mother's sake forgive the past, and try to care a little for one who holds you very dear."

Adriel was silent a moment, and Lady Sandilands half feared she had turned her self in vain; but presently the girl turned to her with outstretched hands.

"I have tried hard to hate you," she said, with childlike candour, "but I can't; and because mamma would wish it, and because of your goodness to me, I will try to be your dutiful and loving grandchild. I don't think the lesson will be hard to learn."

Her ladyship stooped and kissed the smooth, white brow.

"Ah, child!" she said, "if only I had been kinder to your mother!"

"Mamma was very happy, my sisters say," answered Adriel. "You see papa worshipped her, and when she died he did not care to live longer; so he simply lost all interest in all things, and gradually he pined away and died. I don't like to hear people scoff at broken hearts—for his broke, in very deed and truth."

She was speaking dreamily, and her eyes shadowed by her thoughts.

"I think," she went on, in the same low tone, "if I lost anyone who was very near and dear to me by falsehood or death she shock of my loss would kill me."

(Child Adriel! Child Adriel! what was it made you speak in such a prophetic way? Surely the shadow of the sorrow to come must have lain, if ever so lightly, upon you even then!)

"You need fear no such calamity as loss of Lyon," smiled her ladyship. "He is devoted to you, and deceit is unknown to him."

"But I spoke of death, too, grandmamma. No one can guard against that." And then she rose, and shaking herself as though to divest herself of sombre thoughts, she kissed her grandmother more affectionately than she had ever yet done, and went up to her room, there to dream those happy dreams which, alas! alas! might never be fulfilled.

The following day Lyon went down to Stanbury; and finding the quaint, old-fashioned house, inquired for the Misses Vinter, saying that he brought a message from Miss Adriel. He was instantly admitted.

The sisters were a new experience to him—so unfashionable and unaffected, yet so palpably ladies, that the veriest snob would not have questioned their right to the title. They received him with old-world hospitality; and the fact that the great match child Adriel was about to make caused them more of sorrow than pleasure did not decrease Lyon's respect and liking for them.

They were charming, he decided, and he was lucky in securing one of such an amiable family.

He begged that Adriel might go down to his country seat in company with her relatives. To this they readily consented, although tears were not far from their eyes as they remembered this visit would take their darling still further from them.

But when he begged they would swell the party they most emphatically declined, pleading they were so unused to society that they would be utterly out of their element; and ending with an entreaty that he would bring Adriel to them at the close of the month, and remain himself, that they might grow familiar with this new member of their little family.

Lyon Castelain returned to town well pleased with his prospective relatives, and the following week the little party at Palace-gardens migrated to Dorsetshire—Adriel in the gayest spirits, unsuspecting of evil, wholly careless of what the future might hold because the present was so bright.

The Earl of Elster made one of the company, and Vera treated him with alternate graciousness and haughty indifference, until the poor, stupid, but honest-hearted gentleman was driven almost to despair.

"I can't tell what she thinks of me," he said pathetically to Lyon. "One day she is kind, and I hope; but the next, nothing I say or do pleases her."

"Faint heart never won fair lady," quoted Lyon with a smile, "and you must make some allowance for the caprices of beauty. You are not Miss Garland's only lover, and perhaps she is just putting you to the test."

"I wish," answered the youthful Earl, with a sigh, "I wish you would sound her. She might, perhaps, tell you the true state of her feelings. I know she likes and esteems you, for she told me so."

"Oh, I couldn't do that, old fellow! It doesn't seem fair to the lady," Lyon said; but on the morrow, finding Vera alone, he thought it an excellent opportunity to speak to her of her treatment of her luckless lover. She had been unusually capricious throughout the morning, and Elster had gone out, in a half frantic state.

"Do you think you are treating that poor beggar quite kindly, Vera?" he asked, lounging in a chair close by her. "He is in a fine frenzy. It seems to me, young lady, it is your especial delight to torture your hapless victims."

She bent her dark, inscrutable eyes on him. "Has he been complaining? He has his remedy. Let him take it."

The words were cruel, but the voice was soft and alluring.

"You mean that you will not entertain the proposal he is longing to make?"

She reared her head high.

"Has he sent you as his ambassador? Would you wish to see me, 'mated to a

clown?" she asked, awfully. "I hoped that you were my friend, that at least you wished me happiness," and then she paused with flushing eyes and heaving bosom; and he, distressed at her emotion, went to her side.

"Vera," he said, apologetically, "you cannot think for a moment I meant to hurt you? Surely you know that for your own sake and Adriel's you are dear to me, and that I have quite a brother's interest in you? I am well aware Eleter is not brilliant, but he is a very honest fellow."

"Pray do not urge his merits further," she retorted; and, snatching her hand from his, hurried from the room, leaving Lyon perplexed and a little annoyed with himself for his intervention on the Earl's behalf.

"Why couldn't he speak himself?" he thought. "And who was to guess that the belle of the season possessed a heart? I had an idea, always that she was rather mercenary. For once my discrimination is at fault. Well, Adriel will make my peace with her," and then he dismissed Vera and the whole subject from his mind, until the morning, when Eleter, almost in tears, bade him good-bye, saying lamentably, he had lost all pleasure in life since the beautiful Vera turned a deaf ear to his entreaties.

The girl herself gave no sign that she remembered the scene of the previous day, but was careless and unconcerned in her manner, as was her wont.

And on the following day Lyon saw no change in her, only Adriel knew there was some cloud upon the beauty's sky. Once or twice she had come unexpectedly upon her, to find her reading a letter, with a frowning brow and troubled face, but she had not ventured to question her as to the cause of her disquiet.

She had gone to rest one night, and was lying thinking happy thoughts of Lyon when a light tap came at her door, and, in answer to her "come in," Vera entered.

There was a bright flush upon her cheek, and her eyes shone like stars, as she came forward with one finger upon her lip, as though to enjoin silence.

"Hush!" she said, in a whisper, "grandma is in her room; and if she hears us talking will wonder and question us what we had to say to each other, that she might not know. Adriel, I want your advice and help."

"My advice isn't worth much," laughed Adriel, "but such as it is you shall have it; and, of course, if I can help you in anything, I shall be proud and glad."

"You are a dear little soul. The fact is, I am in a peck of trouble, and hardly know what to do for the best. Read this," handing her a note, "and then tell me what to do."

It was written in a good, bold hand writing, and, if short, was certainly to the point.

"You cruel, beautiful darling, how long will you torture me, and banish me from you? You say you love me. Give me some proof of this! I cannot rest, I cannot work; all my soul is filled with the fear of losing you. To-day I heard your name coupled with that of my most formidable rival, Vera. You shall not marry him or any but me. On Friday I shall follow you to Castellain House. If I do not meet you in the grounds by noon I shall come to the house. Suspense I will bear no longer. "MARSTON ROCK."

"What does it mean?" asked Adriel, sitting erect. "And who is Mr. Marston Rock?"

"It means that I am secretly engaged, and to the writer of this note," Vera answered, with averted face.

"This, then, is the reason why you were so cold to the poor Earl! But, Vera, why don't you acknowledge the engagement, and save both yourself and Mr. Rock anxiety?"

"Because grandmamma has refused to sanction it, as Mr. Rock is not my equal, either in rank or wealth. He is a struggling artist, without any influence, and I, you know, am entirely under her ladyship's control until my twenty-third birthday. She has even power, if she chooses, to stop my allow-

ance; and how can we marry on nothing? Marston must be patient and cautious. If only grandmamma suspected he was coming here she would send me away at once, and exile is so ignominious. Adriel, I want you to meet Mr. Rock for me!"

"I? Oh, Vera! Surely you do not mean this? You will not send your unfortunate lover away without seeing him?"

"I must!" Vera answered, sadly. "I know so well with what entreaties he will come primed, and—and I love him so that I am as wax in his hands. He would persuade and I should yield; consent to a hasty marriage, and I should drag him down—work misery for us both. I can't do it! I won't! But you, dear, you will tell him all I say, and assure him of my love?"

"Why not write?" asked Adriel, practically.

"Because it is safer to send messages by word of mouth; but if, Adriel, you will not oblige me at so small a cost to yourself, I have no more to say, only I thought you loved me, and would help me," and she rose with her proudest air, and made as though to go.

"Stay," cried Adriel. "Dear Vera, you are wronging me, indeed! I hesitated only because I do not like to deceive grandmamma, but I will do anything you wish."

"Thank you, oh! thank you a thousand times! I would not trouble you, but there is no other to whom I could apply. And you will tell me one of this affair, or your part in it?"

"Not even Lyon?"

"Least of all Lyon. He is so very scrupulous, he would go at once to grandmamma and tell her all. You promise secrecy most solemnly?"

"You may trust me, Vera," but a sudden sense of trouble oppressed her.

CHAPTER V.

On the following Friday, as luck would have it, Lyon begged Adriel to ride with him to a neighbouring village; and she, with an air of confusion, refused, much to his chagrin; and to make matters worse, Lady Sandilands looked up from her letters to say—

"My dear child, there is no possible reason why you should not go! You have no prior engagement. Run and put on your habit."

"I would rather not, grandmamma, thank you. Lyon, dear, there is something I wish especially to do this morning. You will excuse me. To-morrow if you care to—"

"To-morrow!" he interrupted, haughtily, "will not do. I really cannot postpone my business; but pray do not alter your engagements to suit my convenience."

The girl's face flushed distressfully, and she glanced at Vera appealingly; but that young lady was apparently absorbed in her correspondence, and seemed not to notice the storminess of the atmosphere.

"Really Lyon, I would like to go, but I cannot."

"Pray say no more on the subject," coldly, and he went from the room, with head erect, and angry eyes.

"Why, Adriel," said her ladyship. "What is the very important engagement of which I am quite ignorant?"

"I cannot tell you now," the girl answered, uncertainly, and with her face steadily averted lest the other should see her tears; "but you will know some day!"

"I dislike mystery exceedingly, Adriel," was the cold reply, and she vouchsafed no other word. The child was wretched, all through her little life she had never had a harsh word or unkind look, and the warm, young heart felt like to break.

"Oh, Vera!" she said, as soon as they were alone. "You must let me tell all to Lyon. I cannot bear to make him angry. Grandmamma's displeasure I can bear, but not his."

"Please yourself," Vera answered, coldly,

"but I always thought a promise was a sacred thing. If a frown from Lyon will make you break your word I am sorry I ever trusted you."

"Say no more," Adriel cried quickly. "After such a remark as yours I would die rather than fail you. If trouble comes of it, I trust to your generosity to clear me of blame; but I will speak no word in my own behalf."

Then Vera, seeing that she had gone too far, and that this little cousin of hers was not devoid of spirit, put her arms about her, and kissed her tenderly.

"I am ashamed of myself for my unkind words, and so sorry that I have vexed you; only—only, when one's whole life happiness is at stake, one is apt to be a trifle selfish. And when Lyon returns the cloud will have blown over. He will have forgotten his displeasure and its cause."

"And I spoke more hastily than I should have done, only I was a little sore at heart," Adriel answered, with quick generosity, and so they "made friends" again.

A little before noon the girl started upon her errand, charged with many messages from Vera, and an entreaty that her lover would at once return to town and await news from her; not to risk discovery by remaining in the neighbourhood of Castellain House. And Vera watched her go with a strange, cruel smile upon her perfect lips.

"Poor fool!" she said, laughing, low, "Puppet of my will! If you only knew! If you only knew! I could have liked you well had you not come between me and my desire; and now—ah! now I could kill you rather than see you his wife!" Her face was awful to see as she spoke those words; but the paroxysm of rage passed, and she sat down in a low chair, and with hands lightly folded, gazed herself up to thoughts of the past. She had been foolish to go quite so far with Marston, but she had not foreseen how troublesome he would be; and of course when she chose she could crush him at a blow.

He was a portrait painter, and had been introduced to Lady Sandilands and her grand daughter by a celebrated art critic. He was proud and glad to accept the order. And Miss Garland thought it pleasant occupation for her leisure moments to bring him to her feet.

It was not a hard task. The poor lad, he was little more, was an enthusiast; and he idealised this lovely, gracious girl, "with her sweet eyes and low replies," and in spirit wonipped the idol he had created.

The portrait finished was exhibited at the Academy, and pronounced exquisite.

Vera Garland became a notoriety. And then finished with success, mad with love, and full of dreams of a glorious future, Marston Rock ventured to tell his passion.

Vera was flattered, although in her heart she laughed at the poor enthusiast, and in her inextinguishable love of conquest determined to hold this new victim hard and fast until he was no longer useful or amusing to her.

She half confessed she returned his passion. She prayed his secrecy and patience, urging that Lady Sandilands had discovered their mutual attachment, and threatened to exert her authority over her, Vera, unless she promised to dismiss her ineligible lover at once and for ever.

And the poor artist believed this story, fretted and fumed over his poverty, grew restless in his ways and moods, uncertain in his movements.

The one great passion of his life consumed him, and for him "joy was not, but love of joy should be."

"Lyon will be returning soon," said Vera to herself. "Now may the fates be propitious! If only he sees Adriel with Marston, the rest is easy. He is jealous, and she is proud. Oh, to think that I should use one lover to win the other!" and again her soft, cruel laugh rang out.

She had no pity for any but herself, not love for any but Lyon.

And alas! alas! her wish was to be fulfilled.

Riding slowly through the grounds on his return journey, at a little distance from him, half hidden by the shrubs, he saw two figures. The one was Adriel's, the other that of a man unknown to him.

A rush of jealous rage and suspicion came upon him, and reining in his horse he watched the unconscious pair.

The girl was talking quickly and earnestly, using those pretty little gestures he knew so well, and the man with his head bent seemed listening attentively.

Lyon's heart was like fire in his breast; there was almost murder in his thoughts. That she! "Child Adriel," his little innocent, seeming love, could so deceive him! Great Heaven! was any woman true? If he could but hear their words! And then, as he waited and watched, the man lifted one of Adriel's small hands to his lips, and she showed no anger, although she drew it somewhat quickly away. Still she bade him a kindly farewell, and Lyon, watching him go, wished that he had felled him where he stood.

Adriel remained motionless, her eyes following that retreating figure, until Lyon, dismounting, led his horse towards her.

She heard the sound of the hoofs upon the hard ground, and turning, saw her lover. The frowning brow and angry eyes told her that she was discovered.

In her dismay and distress she could not move, she could not speak, only her fair face flushed hotly; and all these signs were as proofs of her guilt to her jealous lover.

"I understand now," he said, icily, "why you would not accompany me this morning! But it was hardly judicious to allow my rival an interview in my grounds."

Dumb she stood, too hurt by his suspicion for speech to be easy, and he went on,—

"I am glad to see you have the grace to be ashamed of such heartless treachery. Great Heaven! that you could be so false, you who seemed so true! Girl! is it my wealth that has tempted you? Ah, curses on it! A poor man I might have been happy!"

She ventured then to stretch out one hand to him, but he would not clasp or touch it, and with a little sob she let it fall to her side. Then she said, in a broken voice,—

"Lyon, you are wronging me. Ah! dear, be patient, and I will tell you all. In nothing have I deceived or sinned against you. Do not be so hard" (as he looked incredulous).

"I am speaking nothing but the truth, and I shall soon be able to satisfy you of that."

"Satisfy me now," he demanded. "I have a right to ask so much."

"You must wait until to-night," she answered. "I will tell you all then. Take me into the fernery after dinner."

"Why not make a clean breast of the affair now?" he said, sharply. "Who is the fellow? How and where did you first meet him?"

"I am bound to silence by a promise, but this evening I shall be released from it, and I will hide nothing from you. The secret is not my own. I have no personal secrets from you. Lyon, dear, you believe me, don't you?" and she lifted her sweet, small face to him in earnest pleading.

"I don't know what to believe," moodily; "but I will pass no judgment upon you until I have heard what account you can give of your proceedings this evening. Does Lady Sandilands know of your acquaintance with this—this—er—gentleman?"

"No."

"How long have you known him?" mercurially.

"Only quite recently," she answered, faintly.

"A month ago?" he demanded.

"No."

"And yet you allow him to kiss your hand, grant him private meetings! What am I to understand from this?"

She flushed upon him then,—

"To-night you will be sorry that you ever suspected me so vilely, or insulted me so grossly."

"I am waiting to be convinced," and with that he turned and left her standing in the open way.

Ah! never in the dreary future could he forget her face as then he saw it—so white, so drawn, so reproachful. At that moment, alas! alas! he only thought what a finished actress she was.

Blindly she made her way back to the house. This was their first quarrel, the first hint she had of the bitterness of love. Before she had only tasted its sweetness; and to the tender, inexperienced girl it seemed that she should die of this strange, cruel pain; that never any more would she be glad because Lyon had once doubted her truth and her devotion.

Vera, watching for her coming, felt all her pulses throb exultantly as she saw Lyon returning alone, and evidently sorely vexed.

Later, with lagging steps, came "child Adriel," very white and very weary, as though spent with a long journey; and the cruel, beautiful watcher laughed ever so softly as she waited for her coming.

At last she heard the light, slow step upon the stairs, the touch of Adriel's hand upon the door, and went forward eagerly to meet her.

"What has happened?" she cried, with affectionate solicitude. "My dearest, how ill you look? And what did Marston say? Was he reasonable? Tell me all—unless you are too ill!"

"Oh, Vera!" cried the other, pitifully, "he saw us together—Lyon, I mean; and he thinks—he thinks that I stole out to keep an appointment with a clandestine lover, as though any lady would so far forget what was due to herself." Vera winced, she was not guiltless of such an offence. "We—we quarrelled, and he said very cruel words to me."

"What answer did you make to his accusation?" asked Vera, quickly, her cheeks flushed, and her eyes bright. "Did you tell him the truth, or part of the truth?"

"I told him nothing," answered Adriel, wearily. "But I promised he should know to-night."

"Ah, no! no!" cried Vera, falling on her knees, and grasping her cousin's skirts. "Not to-night for my sake, for my sake. Be silent a little longer, and all my life I will be grateful to you. In a few days I shall be gone. I have made up my mind at last—and when I am Marston's wife Lyon will know all. Adriel! you will not betray me now?" and she clung with strong hands about her, and she seemed to weep.

The girl was sorely distressed. She was fain to serve her cousin, who had always been so good to her; but she owed a duty to Lyon. Moreover, she did think Vera a little selfish.

So she wavered and hesitated, and Vera, fearful lest she should fail in her plans even now, sobbed heavily,—

"You, who are happy in your love, should have mercy on one less fortunate. After all, it is a little thing I ask, and you can easily prevail upon Lyon to wait a few days for your explanation. If not, why I myself will tell him all—even though by so doing I spoil every chance of happiness for myself. He cannot long be angry with you. Adriel, dear, dear Adriel, I leave my fate in your hands!"

What match is the dove to the serpent in cunning? What hope was there for Adriel when opposed to such an antagonist as Vera? With a heavy sigh, she laid her arms about her cousin's shoulders.

"Dear, I will try to bear this pain for your sake!"

And with that, she gently kissed the beautiful, false mouth, and seemed to listen a moment to the apparently heartfelt thanks, spoken in a sweet, shaken voice; then she crept like a hurtling out of the room, up to the privacy of her own, and flinging herself down upon her bed, shed the bitterest tears that had ever dimmed her young eyes.

She did not go down again until the dinner-

bell rang, and then she looked so ill and weary that Lyon's heart began to relent towards her, and he longed ardently for the moment of her reconciliation.

But Lady Sandilands was seriously annoyed with her grandchild, and showed this by her studied politeness, and frigid bearing.

CHAPTER VI.

"WELL, Adriel, I am waiting for your explanation!" began Lyon, when he had carefully closed the fernery door behind him.

"Forgive me!" she answered, almost weeping. "I have none to give."

And he hardened himself against her.

"You are a trifle inconsistent," he said, icily. "This morning you promised to clear up this mystery; to-night you declare you have nothing to say. Pray which statement am I to accept?"

"Lyon," she faltered, "it is not that I could not clear myself if I were at liberty to do so; but I told you before, I am bound by a promise—the one to whom I made it will not release me yet. Oh, my dear! oh, my dear! have patience with me! I—I cannot bear your anger."

"I have just cause to be angry," he retorted. "I should be less than a man were I not. Do you suppose it can be pleasant to me to know that my promised wife is holding secret meetings with some fellow who dare not, for his own reasons, present himself at my house?"

And then he caught her hands in a close, and almost cruel grip, whilst he looked searchingly into her eyes.

"I love no one but you," she said, simply, "and you are my only lover!"

Her words only added to the mystery; he never thought of connecting Vera with it. The beauty was too proud to compromise herself with an ineligible lover. So he dropped Adriel's hands, and said,—

"If you are speaking truth, Heaven forgive my doubts. If you are lying to me, I shall soon know—and I never pardon deceit—systematic deceit. I will not urge you further to explain now, but I do insist that you promise never to see or speak with this fellow again."

"I cannot even do that. I gave him my word to meet him to-morrow, but after that I will obey your wish. Lyon! oh, my dear Lyon! you may trust me, indeed you may. I love you too well to sin against you, as you think I am sinning. Do not let us part in anger to-night. I—I cannot bear it!"

He turned and looked at her; her small sweet face was white as the gown she wore, and tears were raining down her cheeks; the childish, lovely mouth was tremulous with grief. He doubted her still—but he loved her well, and her tears broke down his pride.

He caught her madly to his breast.

"If you are deceiving me, as Heaven is above us, I never will forgive you! For I love you—I love you with every heart-throb. You are more to me than angels and I possess, and my life will be good or evil as you deal with me. Not any other woman could have prevailed upon me to do her bidding, or wait her pleasure in such a matter as this. Oh, love! my little love, be true!"

"In three days," she said, clinging to him, and weeping now for joy at his tenderness. "I shall hold myself absolved of my vow; and then—then I think you will regret a little that you were so hasty to condemn me. For the present, try to trust me more; for, surely, if perfect love casts out fear, it should leave no room for doubt."

Oh! in after days how he would remember her innocent, earnest words. How she tried to smile as she uttered them, and with what fond hands she clung about him.

"Kiss me!" she said, as they turned to quit the fernery. "Kiss me, good-night here—I am going to my room!"

And that was the last kiss he would ever give her until—until she had almost escaped

from beyond his love, and all his regrets would be in vain; when his self-reproaches would be as scorpions to sting and scourge him!

That night Adriel slept happily, rising in the morning refreshed and bright. She had told Vera her decision, and Miss Garland had said,—

"I cannot expect further help from you, Adriel. You have been most good to me. At the close of three days you may tell Lyon all. Give this note to Marston, and beg him to send me a wee line by you in return. I am in sore need of comfort and assistance."

And when she was alone Vera paced up and down, up and down her room, with white face and clenched hands.

"What shall I do? What shall I do? Only three days in which to accomplish my purpose! If the next move fails he is lost to me—lost! and I love him as she never could! I will not give him to her! Oh, Lyon! Lyon! Lyon!" she wailed with outstretched, yearning hands. "Can you not love me a little since I love you so much?"

Adriel sped on her errand, glad to think she would not be called upon to meet Marston again. The young painter was waiting for her, and advanced eagerly to meet her.

"I have brought you a note," she said, gently, "and Vera begs you will entrust me with a written message. She is very depressed, and none but you can offer her comfort!"

The fair, handsome face flushed with passionate love, and the joy of believing his capricious darling had succumbed at last to his entreaties.

"Miss Vinter," he said, quickly, "if only Vera will marry me at once she shall never have a moment of wretchedness that I can avert."

"I can readily believe that," in the same gentle tone. "Now, if you please, you will write your reply. I must get back quickly."

"I will not detain you long; but—forgive me—I heard that Lady Sandilands had brought Vera here that Mr. Castellain might have a chance of proposing for her hand—that he was madly devoted to her."

"Your informant was altogether mistaken," with pretty dignity. "It is I who have the honour to be Mr. Castellain's chosen wife!"

"Thank you a thousand times for your confidence. You have allayed some very cruel doubts," and then he wrote a few lines on a page from his pocket-book, and folding it, entrusted it to the girl, saying, "When shall I see you again?"

"I do not know. I cannot consent to carry messages to and fro thus, and—Mr. Castellain objects. I think your best course would be to take matters into your own hands—and I wish you and Vera all the happiness I could desire for myself." Then she gave him her hand timidly; and presently went away, a gracious, gentle little figure, and in his heart the happy lover blessed her.

By tacit consent Lyon and Adriel avoided each other, fought shy of any *tête-à-tête*. Each was constrained; each felt that it was better to stand aloof, until the explanation had been given and accepted. Lady Sandilands regarded her grand-daughter with displeasure, and altogether the atmosphere of the house was unpleasant.

On the second evening, Adriel, wishing to escape the discomfort of her ladyship's severe presence, declared herself tired, and begged to be allowed to retire to her room.

"Pray do as you please," answered the elder lady. "I myself am weary, and shall be glad to precede you." With which she gathered her sumptuous skirts about her and went loftily out.

"Good-night," Adriel said, just touching Lyon's hand. He was looking cross and bored; and then she moved towards the door, followed by Vera.

"Good-night, dear," said the latter. "Sleep well, and have happy dreams," and she kissed the fair, pale face, which after to-night should never be glad or bright again. Then closing

the door upon the girl, she moved near the table, saying,—

"Well, Lyon, I suppose, I too, must retire, although I am not in the least bit weary." Then she stooped, and picking up a folded paper with a light laugh, remarked, "Adriel is really too careless of your *billet doux*. I will give it back to the writer," and she handed Marston's note to him.

He flushed crimson.

"I never remember writing on such paper as this!" he said.

"Lovers are proverbially forgetful," smiled Miss Garland, "but I think it is useless to deny the authorship of this. Presently Adriel will come down to look for her lost treasure, because, like all romantic girls, she sleeps with her latest love-letter under her pillow. Good-night, Lyon," and then she too went away—but not to sleep, for on this last throw depended, or seemed to depend, all the joy of her future. And Lyon sat staring at the little folded note Vera had flung down so cunningly, and discovered so naturally.

He felt sure that he had never seen it before. He knew he was doing a dishonourable thing, as little by little his hand closed over it. He breathed hard; his colour came and went. He had always been upright and honest in his dealings, but now a sudden temptation assailed him; and arguing that it was his right to satisfy himself as to the authorship of the note, he slowly unfolded it. It was dated for that very day, and ran thus:—

"MY DARLING,—

"You ask me for help and comfort. Come to me, and, by Heaven's grace, I will give you both. Let us go away together, and I will work for my wife as I know I can work. I only need your dear presence to inspire me. The knowledge that Lyon Castellain is nothing to you has removed a heavy weight from my heart. My beautiful darling, let us delay no longer. Let us take our fates into our own hands; you shall never regret reposing so much trust in your loving

"M. R."

The note dropped from Lyon's hand. This, then, was the woman he had loved and trusted—the guileless girl who had wept at his reproaches, who had sworn that her life had but one love, and he was that love. He almost cursed her in that hour—the poor innocent child who had never wronged him by thought or deed.

How little Marston Race guessed the evil his note to Vera would work! What suffering would result to Adriel and himself because of it!

Lyon paced up and down the room, half mad with rage and pain; and then his eyes falling once more upon the note, he took it up and tearing it into fragments, flung it from an open window.

"At least," he thought, "others shall not know how false she is," and then he sat down to write to her.

It was only a brief note, but though he did not guess it then it carried death with it. Then, this being finished, he scribbled a line to Lady Sandilands, begging her to consider Castellain House as her very own during his brief and compulsory absence, and promising to return as soon as business would allow.

Then he went to bed, though not to sleep, bidding his valet to call him at an abnormally early hour; so that before the ladies rose he was once more in town, which at this season was empty and dreary enough.

Lady Sandilands was first to enter the breakfast-room, and finding Lyon's note read it, wondering, somewhat, that he should have gone off so suddenly, but suspecting no evil.

"Adriel," she said, as the girl entered, "there is a note from Lyon beside your plate. He has been compelled to leave home for a short while, but will return as quickly as possible."

Adriel had no suspicion of the truth as she thrust the cruel missive into her pocket,

thinking, with a sudden gladness, that, despite their strained relations, Lyon could not leave her without some fond farewell, and longing for the meal to end that she might escape to her own room, there to read her precious note alone.

And Vera, in a state of anxiety, bordering on desperation, helped her in this.

"Grandmamma," she said, "naturally Adriel is dying to read her love-letter. Don't you think we ought to excuse her now. See, she is eating nothing. May she not leave us?"

"She may if she wishes," said her ladyship, coldly, and waiting for no further speech Adriel hurried away.

Up in her own room she tore open the envelope, her eyes so bright with love, her face so flushed and expectant, that could Lyon have seen her then he must have read the truth.

But, alas! alas! this was not to be; and as the girl mastered the substance of his note, her face changed and whitened. All the red died from her lips, and she stood like one turned to stone, scarcely breathing, scarcely conscious of what had befallen her. And it was thus Vera found her.

The arch-traitress put an arm about her, and kissed the pale, cold cheek gently. Adriel never heeded her; and before she spoke she read over her shoulder the few brief, cruel lines Lyon had written.

"I no longer ask or wish for an explanation of your conduct. It is less than nothing now to me why you have acted as you have done. Pray consider our engagement cancelled. From the first it was a mistake, and I do not hold you bound to me, neither do I consider myself dishonourable in breaking the frail tie which held me to you. You are utterly and absolutely at liberty to please yourself; and under no circumstance, believe me, can I resume the old relationship between us. You and I have nothing in common, and are best apart!"

"Adriel! what has happened?" questioned Vera, seeing in a lightning flash that the game was now in her hands. "Why are you standing here like a ghost? Why do you tremble thus?"

"What does it mean?" the poor child asked, hoarsely. "I cannot understand. Last night he was kind to me, and but two days ago he vowed he loved me more than all the world beside. This is some cruel mistake. Oh, Vera! say you believe that it is!"

"My poor child! my poor child!" murmured the other. "I can offer you no consolation; men are so fickle, and Lyon is not the hero you made him. His wavering fancy has rested upon some other woman. He does not love you any longer."

"I won't believe it," Adriel cried, hotly. "He could never be so base; and it is such a little time since he and I were engaged."

"Long enough for a man to weary of his love, Adriel! Adriel! I hate to say it, but there is another woman. For the time you are not first. Don't faint! Be brave!"

And as the girl reeled, she caught her in her arms, almost afraid of the effect wrought by her own words. But Adriel twisted herself free.

"Who is she?" she asked in a hoarse, strained voice; and Vera covering her face with her hands, cried,—

"Forgive me! Oh, forgive me! It is not my fault that he is false; and, in time, he will return to his old allegiance."

"You mean," questioned the unhappy victim, "he loves you?"

"He says so. It was last night. I was left alone with him, and I thought it an excellent chance to tell him all the truth, and all your goodness to me. But he would not hear me out. He vowed I should never marry Marston, and that he loved me more than life. That—oh! how can I hurt you so badly?—but you ought to know the truth that you may learn to despise him—he said he never meant to propose to you; but that you had

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The girl turned gaspingly upon her.

"Did he say those shameful words? Answer me; do not spare me—you cannot hurt me further. Are you telling me all the truth and nothing but truth?"

"Did I ever lie to you?" proudly. "Adriel, it is hard to be suspected wrongfully, and from the first I have loved you dearly."

"Yes, yes!" dearly, "and I am sorry to wound you; but I am not quite myself—not yet—not yet! I shall be braver and juster soon. Vera, what did you say when he confessed he loved you?"

"I told him some bitter truths; and because of them he has gone away. Adriel," feverishly, "what are you going to do?"

"I don't know. You must leave me to myself a little while. I must think! Go—go now! I only want to be alone!"

And all the while she shed no tear, and made no moan. But she thought in a vague way what she must do, and determined that she could never—never meet Lyon again.

To Vera she would not go for help; it was Vera he loved. She could not go to Lady Sandilands, because she was under the ban of her displeasure.

Then, all at once, she thought of home—that dear old-fashioned home, where she had been happy through eighteen years—the kindly old-world sisters who had loved her so dearly; and then she rose up.

"I will go home! I will go home!" she said, under her breath, and "there I shall be at rest."

She dressed hastily, and, counting out her little store of money, went downstairs, and away from Castellain House for ever.

No one saw her go—no one missed her until luncheon, and then Vera said she supposed she had fallen asleep in her own room, as she had seemed very weary, and it would be a shame to disturb her, so that Adriel's flight remained undiscovered until evening.

It was quite dark when she reached Stanbury; but she was too wretched to feel any fear of the lonely, gloomy streets, and soon she came to her own home.

The maids had gone to bed—they kept early hours—and Miss Aurora herself opened the door to her young sister.

She gave one swift glance at the shrinking figure, the white, woe-begone face; then shrieked,—

"Adriel! oh! Adriel!"

"Yes, it is I. Let me in, Aurora; I have come home to die!"

And then the spell of grief and stupor broke, the pale lips quivered, and the heavy sobs came, accompanied by a shower of bitter tears; and yet, through all her anguish it was good to feel herself safe in Aurora's loving arms, with Biddy kissing and fondling her slender hands.

The next day Lady Sandilands received a telegram from Aurora.

"The child is with us; a letter will follow." She replied by forwarding Adriel's belongings, and wiring, "Further communications not desired," and so that chapter in the child's life was ended.

CHAPTER VII.

In the days that followed, Lyon Castellain was not a happy man. He could not blot out the memory of those few bright weeks—the brightest he had ever known, or was to know again.

It was easy enough to vow with all a man's pride that he would forget one sweet, small face, and one low voice, both of which had seemed instinct with love for him.

Vera was sympathetic in an unobtrusive way; but Vera was not Adriel, and he was glad when she and Lady Sandilands removed to Scarborough.

The girl was growing desperate. True, she had separated Lyon from her cousin, but she knew that he loved her, and that if by chance

they met explanations might—possibly ensue, and she herself be exposed to the contempt of the only creature she cared for on earth.

Marston Race, too, was growing troublesome, and threatening all sorts of unpleasant things. She had hard work to keep him at bay, and began to realise how foolish she had been to compromise herself so far with him, how all but vain it is to attempt to stay the torrent of an injured man's anger.

At Scarborough Lady Sandilands found her a very distraught companion. She herself was not well, suffering with a long-standing complaint of the heart, and she missed Adriel's gentle ministrations; but believing her guilty of a clandestine love-affair, and angry with her for spoiling her own future she neither wrote nor permitted Vera to do so, although, indeed, that young lady had no wish to correspond with the girl she had so bitterly wronged.

And one night, Lady Sandilands, complaining of extreme fatigue, went early to bed, saying she should be her usual self in the morning. But when the landlady carried up her usual cup of coffee she found her dead in her bed.

So Vera was alone in the world, and in her desolation she dared to do what otherwise had been impossible. She telegraphed to Lyon, begging his assistance, and he joined her at once, taking up residence close by her.

No inquest was necessary, Lady Sandilands' medical man certifying the cause of death; and in his pity for the lonely heiress Lyon took all the responsibility of the funeral arrangements upon himself. And when the sad ceremony was ended, and he and Vera were alone, he said,—

"And now, my poor girl, what do you propose doing?"

"I am utterly alone, quite friendless," she answered, sadly. "There is nothing I can do save hire a chaperone—and I hate hirelings about me. I dare say there are many who envy me my wealth, but the poorest drudge on earth, who has a home and friends, is happier than I," and then she lifted her eyes to his, and in them he read her love for him—as she intended he should.

He was shocked and sorry for a moment; then swiftly came the thought, "We are both alone. She loves me, and if I like and esteem her—why should we not marry?"

So he took her willing hands in his, and said,—

"Vera, you know my past, and that the one love of my life was given to one who did not value it. If you will be content with a second place in my heart I will do my best to make you a happy wife."

"Lyon," she answered, "I love you, I love you! I will be satisfied with the lowest place in your affection!"

And so they were betrothed; and as Vera had no friends to receive her, it was settled they should be married as quickly as possible, and at once return to Lyon's place.

So one morning Vera, laying aside her black robes for a pretty lavender gown, walked quietly to church with Lyon, and became his wife.

Society was electrified at this *dénouement*. It had not yet quite forgotten Adriel, and it was shrewdly suspected that somewhere there had been false play.

Adriel first learned of this ill-starred marriage through the medium of a fashionable paper.

She was lying upon a couch, looking very frail and feeble, she had never been anything but ailing since her return home, and turning the leaves in a languid way, when her startled eyes fell upon the announcement.

If possible, her white face grew whiter, and a moment her lips quivered ominously. Then she said, with a little pathetic smile,—

"She said he loved her, and sometimes I have doubted her, but I know now that she told the truth," and after that day the sisters did not hear her speak of him. They saw, with breaking hearts, that slowly but surely

she was fading away from them, that soon her couch would be unoccupied. That "in the ways she used to walk she would not walk again," and that soon her place would know her no more. She never complained; no frown clouded the sweetness of her small, sweet face, no angry note jarred the music of her low and languid voice.

"She is too good for earth," Biddy said, sobbing, and Miss Aurora answered,—

"Yes. And yet, but for Lyon Castellain, she would have stayed with us."

The Castellains went abroad, and did not return until the next season was in full swing.

Lyon interested himself in politics, and made much of the wife he did not love. Most folks called him a lucky fellow, but so he did not esteem himself.

One day, as he was leaving St. Stephens, he heard himself accosted in a most unceremonious fashion.

"Hi! you there! Castellain, I want a word with you!"

And turning, he saw a fair-faced, haggard man beside him. It was Marston Race; but Lyon had only seen him once, and then at a distance, so that he did not recognise him.

He glanced coldly at him, asking, in his coldest manner,—

"Who are you, and what do you want of me?"

"I am Marston Race," answered the other, and paused, as though he thought his few words sufficient explanation.

"The man who was going to make a great name in the art-world," said Lyon, quietly. "I have heard of you, your wonderful success, and subsequent failure. But I am at a loss to conceive what it is you want with me!"

"Liar!" cried Marston, beside himself. "For treachery less than yours men have killed each other! You have stolen away my promised wife—ruined my life!"

The other interrupted him, swiftly.

"You are all at sea! Let me explain! I did not even guess she had any lover but myself. I neither knew your name, nor the tie which bound her to you. But I did not marry her. I learned her deceit soon enough to save such a catastrophe. My wife was Miss Vera Garland."

Marston stared at him in bewilderment.

"Why, I am speaking of her! It was she to whom I was bound!"

"Are you lying to me?" Lyon asked, in a dreadful hoarse voice. "Who has sent you on this errand? If you were ever my wife's affianced lover, why did you meet Miss Vinter and correspond with her?"

"I never wrote her a line in my life! But she was my ally and Vera's—at least I believed so. But I suppose she was as false as her cousin; she herself assured me I had nothing to fear from you; that she was soon to be your wife."

"There is something in this I do not understand! Come with me to my club? This mystery must be cleared up!"

They walked side by side in utter silence; but once in a private apartment, Marston Race spoke freely of the wrongs he had endured, of Vera's utter falsehood; and then all was clear to Lyon.

Oh! what a blind fool he had been so to doubt his darling! What a brutal part he had played towards Adriel!

He saw in one dreadful moment the wreck he had made of her life and his—all the sweet possibilities of joy he had hastily thrown aside, all the misery of the blank and hopeless future. He lifted his ashen face to Marston's.

"We have both suffered, but mine is the heaviest burden to bear, for I have sinned too. I have wronged the truest, gentlest heart that beats beneath the sun!"

Then a fierce desire came upon him to see Adriel once more. He must vindicate himself to her, so far as was possible. So dismissing Marston he wrote a line to his wife—his wife! The woman he loathed so heartily

now—saying he should not return that night; and then he went down to Stanbury.

A maid opened the door to him, and Miss Aurora, hearing and recognising his voice, came out into the hall.

"What do you want here?" she asked, grimly. "Have you come to work us further harm?" and she barred his passage in an aggressive fashion.

"I want to see Adriel," he answered, humbly. "I have an explanation to make. I am not so bad as you think me. Will not you let me see her?"

"It remains for her to decide whether she will admit you or not. But I will allow no exciting speech. I will not have her life shortened by agitation. Of course, you have heard she is dying, and your conscience would not let you rest?"

"Dying!" Ah, the anguish in that one word! Strong man as he was he reeled and fell against the wall, "For the love of Heaven assure me this is not so!"

"Are you sorry now? You who had no pity upon her youth and innocence! You, who drove her homewards with her broken heart, and outraged faith! There has never been a day since she returned when I have not prayed Heaven to visit your sin upon you heavily! There has never been a day when I have not thought of some way in which to avenge her bitter wrongs. Oh, man! man! could you not spare her? The poor child, the helpless, loving, trusting, child?" and then her voice broke into sobs, and all her figure was shaken with her long-suppressed anguish.

"As Heaven is my witness," he said, earnestly, "I am innocent of the charge you bring against me. I can explain all—we have both been sinned against! I pray you let me see her."

"Ah, yes, Aurora," said Biddy's fearful voice, "do not deny him this one thing. Let her know the truth before the end. It may comfort her, and make her glad again."

Was this Adriel—this frail, white atom of humanity? Where had her youth and piquancy flown? Where was the smile he knew of old? The sweet eyes were sunken, and there were heavy circles about them. The pallid lips had a mournful curve; and as he looked on her a moment, himself being unperceived, all his manhood forsook him, and he cried with an exceeding bitter cry,—

"Adriel! oh, Adriel!"

She turned quickly, saw him standing there, and forgot everything save that she loved him, and he had come again to her.

"I felt that you would come," she said, stretching out her hands to him. "Heaven is too good to let me die without seeing you;" and then he was on his knees beside her, sobbing the hoarse and terrible sobs of a desperate man, and, woman like, she controlled herself that she might console him.

And when he was calmer, he told her all the gruesome story of Vera's treachery, and his own mad folly and harshness. His face was not good to look upon as he spoke of his wife, and vowed he would neither forgive nor live with her again. And then the loveliness of his poor little sweetheart's nature shone out like a bright star in a cloudy sky.

"If I forgive her, and indeed I do, you must forgive her also. It has been very hard to bear this heartache; but the worst is over now and I shall soon be at peace. But she, poor Vera! may have long years before her. Do not make them all so unhappy as these months have been to me. She sinned through love. Ah! then for love's sake forgive!" and ranch she urged in the same strain, fighting against his obstinacy, his anger, his just scorn and loathing of his wife; and in the end she conquered so far that he promised not to put Vera to open shame, but beyond that he would not go.

All too soon came the hour of parting. He took her in his arms well-knowing he should look on her living face no more; and surely it was no wrong to Vera that he kissed the

pale lips again and again in a very anguish of pain.

Then of her own free will the child put her arms about his neck, and gave him her last kiss, "sacred unto death," and saying,—

"Good-bye, my dear one, good-bye! May Heaven go with you in all your ways, and bless you in all your doings." She loosed him, and let him go, then turned her face to the wall with a little sigh, and slept, or seemed to sleep.

Early in the morning Lyon returned, a desperate man, to his home. Vera was already up, and waiting his coming anxiously. As he entered the room she started up to meet him, but at the sight of his wild face and burning eyes recoiled, crying,—

"Husband! what has happened?"

"I have learned all," he answered, heavily, "and have seen her. She is dying! and you are her murderers!"

She shrieked out then, and tried to touch him, but he thrust her back almost with an oath, and what followed between them then none knew or would ever know. But although they would spend all the weary years of their lives together, Vera would never be his wife save in name, and because she loved him wildly her punishment must perforce be great. Surely both Adriel's and Marston's wrongs could not be more bitterly revenged.

Beauty, rank, and riches she had, but never would she and hapless sleep hands again, and therein lay her punishment.

Aurora and Biddy sat watching by their darling, for the end was very near now. It was a lovely night in May, and through the open window came the scent of countless homely flowers, the last faint songs of the sleepy birds.

"It is a lovely world!" whispered the dying girl. "But for this great grief I would wish to stay a little longer with you. Oh, my dears! my dears! you must not fret overmuch. It is better I should go! far, far better! and—oh, I am very tired. You will write him when I am gone; say I thought of him to the last, and pray him to be kind to her. If it will comfort her, tell her I freely forgave her!"

Only their sobs answered her, and for awhile she lay silent; then she said, very faintly,—

"Kiss me now—whilst I know you—and can reply to you." So they kissed her with fast falling tears, and tried for her sake to be calm.

All night she lay scarcely breathing, hardly conscious of anything around; but with the first grey streak of light in the sky she opened her dark eyes, smiled ever so faintly, and sighing, "Lyon! Lyon!" she fell asleep.

Aurora rose and reverently closed the white lids.

"She is gone!" she said, and with a bitter cry the remaining sisters clung to each other in wordless agony.

Aurora was the first to recover something like composure.

"Come," she said, in a strangled voice, "there is much to do."

"Must we leave her? Oh! Aurora, must we leave her?"

"Now we must. Oh! Biddy, that we should be living and she gone! It is too cruel! too cruel!"

Then hand in hand, with tears raining down their withered cheeks, broken and old before their time, these two poor souls went out, leaving child Adriel to her last long sleep.

[THE END.]

It is pleasant for those who take pride in national industries to know that the Spitalfields weavers are keeping up a high reputation, and that their work compares favourably with productions of foreign manufacture, not only in price but in artistic merit. Some of the brocades, which are made especially to designs, are marvellously beautiful.

FACETIE.

A PRETTY girl will subdue four out of every five men she meets, but it is always the fifth she wants.

Isn't a woman absurdly illogical if she tells her husband he is an idiot, and then asks him why he hasn't more sense?

SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHER: "Has not everybody the right to exercise his free will?" Little Boy: "Yes, until he is married. That's what Pa says."

PATIENT: "Help! Murder! I don't want my head pulled off. You said you were a painless dentist." Dentist: "Exactly. I never take any pains with my customers."

FAIR CUSTOMER (who has been a good hour in the shop without buying anything): "Have you nothing else you can show me?" Shopman: "Yes, madam, the door."

Who will venture to say woman is not infinitely the superior of man when it comes to that, which, in the vernacular, is familiarly termed "packing a trunk?"

JACK: "Why is dough like a man?" SUE: "Because it's hard to get off your hands."

JACK: "Oh, no! It's a thing the women knead."

A NEWSPAPER publishes the following unique advertisement: "If John Jones, who twenty years ago deserted his poor wife and babe, will return, said babe will lick the stuff out of him."

An Irishman was told by a teacher that his charge for tuition was two guineas the first month, and one guinea the second. "Then, be jabbers," said the pupil, "I'll begin the second month now."

"Mr. dear," said a sentimental wife, "home, you know, is the dearest spot on earth." "Well, yes," said the practical husband, "It does cost about twice as much as any other spot."

WIFE: "Have you brought home anything pretty for me?" Conciliated Husband: "Yes, myself. I looked everywhere, but there was nothing handsome to be found in the whole city."

"I know," said the reporter as he was writing out an item for the paper: "I knew this is only a rumour, but I expect to get money for it." "Then," said his friend, "that's one of the rumours that gain currency."

Do your toe-joints crack as you move about in your stocking feet? If so, don't think of going into the burglar business. The successful burglar has crackles joints, and he can catch hold of a would-be sneeze and hold it back until a more fitting opportunity.

A SCHOOLBOY SCHEME.—Joseph: "This is Fatty Truro, sir." The Pedagogue: "Well?" Joseph: "There's a spankin' due to me, and I've give him two tops, a new fish hook, three chestnuts, and a lump of toffee, for him to be my substitute. Peel off, Fatty."

You young girls of sixteen: Don't be pert because you are young and pretty. After you are married, and have two or three children, and are compelled to do your own washing, your friends may remember that you were once almost impudent.

GILHOOLY: "There is something wonderfully realistic at the scene where you smother Desdemona. I don't understand how you can make it appear so realistic." Actor Friend: "Easy enough, my dear boy. All I have to do is to imagine that Desdemona is my mother-in-law."

FIVE or ten minutes of embarrassing silence had sped away into the voiceless past and then a bright idea struck Mr. Nevergo. "It seems like a Quaker meeting," he observed. "Yes," answered the young woman with a hopeless, dreary glance at the clock. "I have been wondering when the spirit was going to—move you, you know."

SOCIETY.

CANON LIDDON is to be commemorated at Christ Church by a portrait, for which the Dean and Chapter have given a commission to Mr. Herkomer, and it will be hung in the hall.

THE Duke of Clarence and Avondale has been out and about a great deal in spite of the severe cold. His Royal Highness looks a great deal better than he did some time ago.

THE Prince of Wales will not return from Norfolk until he starts for the Riviera, and the Princess is to make Sandringham her residence until towards the end of February.

THE muzzling order stands confessed a superfluous or a farce. For the future no dog need be muzzled provided it wears a collar with the name and address of its owner legibly engraved upon it.

THE Queen has lately established a large flock of Dorset Horn sheep at Osborne, instead of the Hampshire Downs which had been kept there for many years. The park now contains a fine herd of the picturesque West Highland cattle.

THE latest pen picture of Dr. Koch describes him as a small man, not more than five feet five inches, but sturdily built. His features are commonplace. Constant use of the microscope has dimmed his eyes, and he is obliged to wear a triplex glass of great power.

THEY are still bringing out pretty shapes in bamboo furniture, which is good as well as cheap, when you procure it from reliable houses. It is so light, too, that you can carry a chair with a couple of fingers, or hold up a table with the palm of the hand quite easily.

ALTHOUGH the Emperor Francis Joseph is only in his sixty-first year, he has shown signs of increasing feebleness of late, and people here are beginning seriously to discuss the question of the succession to the throne.

IT is said that Prince Ferdinand of Rumania is a *pretendu* to the hand of little Princess Marie of Edinburgh, despite the fact that she is "over young to marry yet," being only fifteen. But betrothals at that age are common enough in Russia.

THE Duke of Norfolk, the peer who takes precedence of all others, except the Archbishop of Canterbury in his capacity as spiritual peer, after the Royal blood, is forty-three. His only son and heir is very little improved in health, and his condition is a serious and enduring anxiety to his parent, who is most devoted to his ailing son.

IT used to be said when any member of the aristocracy lifted a silver spoon or fork that they were afflicted with "klopomania." This term has degenerated into "hallucination" of late. People begin to feel more tenderly, and do not like their friends to know that they cannot help a bit of thieving, so it is called in plain words "forgetfulness."

THE Cleopatra bonnet, worn in compliment to this taking Egyptian's memory, is a sweet thing in pale tulle and velvet bows, with a handsome golden serpent encircling the crown. The more alive this ornament can look, the better, so its head is worn uplifted. This is too much of a Pagan coiffure for church wear, but is admirably adapted for creating a sensation when paying calls or going to morning concerts.

THE curious announcement is made that, in accordance with a decision of the Dutch High Court of Justice, the oath of allegiance is to be taken to "King" and not to Queen Wilhelmina. Every one knows that to the patriotism of the Hungarian magnates Maria Theresa was "Rex noster," and that our own Elizabeth was fond of calling herself a Prince; but these were figures of speech. The Dutch monarchy is so recent that there can be no tradition in the matter. We presume that the Constitution of the Netherlands contains no interpretation by which the word "King" includes the title Queen.

STATISTICS.

THE world's press is stated to include 37,000 newspapers.

THE London and North-Western Railway passes through twenty English counties.

THE people of the United States consume, it is said, 200,000,000 bottles of pickles annually.

THE engines of the large ocean steamers make about 250,000 turns in crossing the Atlantic between New York and Liverpool.

THE United States has 884 paper mills and 1,106 paper machines; Germany, 809 mills and 891 machines; France, 420 mills and 525 machines; England, 361 mills and 541 machines; Scotland, 69 mills and 98 machines; Ireland, 18 mills and 18 machines; Russia, 133 mills and 137 machines; and Austria, 220 mills and 270 machines.

GEMS.

A COWARD can be a hero at a distance; it is presence of danger that tests presence of mind.

NATURE loves truth so well that it hardly ever admits of flourishing. Conceit is to nature what paint is to beauty; it is not only needless, but impairs what it would improve.

THE religion that simply folds its hands and tries to look seraphic, while the devil's highway is thronged with those who are rushing headlong to the pit, is not the kind that the apostles had.

WHY not pour the drink into the gutter? It is destined to the gutter at last. Why not pour it there at once, and not wait to strain it through a man, and spoil the strainer in the work?

HE who thinks better of his neighbours than they deserve is seldom a bad man, for the standard by which his judgment is guided is the goodness of his own heart. It is only the base who believe all men base, or, in other words, like themselves.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

FOR burns, sweet oil and cotton are the standard remedies. If they are not at hand sprinkle the burned part with flour, and wrap loosely with a soft cloth. Don't remove the dressing until the inflammation subsides, as it will break the new skin that is forming.

FOR CRISP.—One quart of flour, one heaping cup of lard, a pinch of salt; chop the lard and flour together and add just as little very cold water as will suffice to roll out the dough. The less water used, and the less handling you give the dough the better. Some cooks add a pinch of baking powder.

BLACK PUDDINGS.—Prepare the skins. Have some pig's blood, and while it is warm salt it a little, stir it for a while and strain it, add a cupful of milk to the blood. Have half as much chopped suet as of dried oatmeal, and half as much chopped onions; plenty of salt and pepper to taste, some nutmeg if it is to be very nice. Stir all this into the blood to make it pretty thick; fill the skins, tie, prick, and boil gently three-quarters of an hour.

SMALL TEA BISCUITS.—One-quarter of a pound of flour, one-quarter ounce of butter, half-ounce of firm, sweet lard, a little less than a gill of milk, one teaspoonful of baking powder, and one saltspoonful of salt. Mix the baking powder with a portion of the flour and sift it into the rest of the flour through a fine sieve; then rub the butter, lard, and salt through the flour until quite fine; pour in the milk, mix lightly, place on the board which has been well floured, and roll it with the rolling-pin without kneading. Cut with a small cutter, prick up and bake in a hot oven until brown on top.

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE Oriental physicians of India practiced vaccination long before the doctrine was announced by Doctor Jenner.

IT is estimated that to collect one pound of honey from clover, 62,000 head of clover, must be deprived of nectar, and 3,750,000 visits from bees must be made.

ANESTHETICS were known in the days of Homer, and the Chinese two thousand years ago had a preparation of hemp, known as "una yo," to deaden pain.

JACOB'S well, and the plot of ground surrounding it, have been sold by the Turkish Government to the Greek Church for four thousand pounds.

THOSE who have a tendency towards consumption should take easy vocal exercises, no matter how thin and weak their voices may seem to be. They will find a realm at times far surpassing any relief afforded by medicine.

PLATINUM and silver can each be drawn into wire many times smaller than a human hair. The former metal has been drawn into wire so fine that 27 of them twisted together could have been inserted into the hollow of a hair; that is, if a human being or a human-made machine could be found minute and precise enough for such a delicate undertaking.

"ELECTRICAL flat irons" are now in the market, or, more correctly, irons heated by the electric current. The interior contains a set of coiled wires, through which the electrical current passes and heats the wires red hot. The latter are arranged between protecting sheets of mica and asbestos. By turning a switch the flat iron at once heats up ready for use.

THE possibilities of insurance seem endless. It has been reserved for an ingenious broker to offer to insure against what may be best termed "household negligence." The argument is certainly feasible—a shipowner insures against the negligence of his servants, the officers and crew of the vessel, so why should not a household insure against similar risks? Time alone can prove whether complete assurance can be obtained.

IT is reported that a Hebrew gentleman in New York owns the only genuine and perfect holy shewel in the world. The relic is said to be 3,400 years old, and was used in King Solomon's Temple perhaps, although it would doubtless be difficult to prove this. There is but one other similar coin in existence, and that is in the British Museum. It is also a holy shewel, but is not so well preserved, and a portion of it has been cut away.

IN order to tell the day of the week of any late, take the last two figures of the year, add a quarter to this, disregarding the fraction, add the date of the month, and to this add the figure in the following list, one figure standing for each month: 3 6 6 2 4 0 2 5 1 3 6 1. Divide the sum by 7, and the remainder will give the number of the day in the week, and when there is no remainder the day will be Saturday. As an example, take March 19, 1890. Take 90, add 22, add 19, add 6. This gives 137, which, divided by 7, leaves a remainder of 4, which is the number of the day, or Wednesday.

A GERMAN medical scientist has declared that a form of inebriety due to the excessive use of coffee is on the increase in Germany, and that its worst form is found among the women of the upper working classes, where the wages permit of the purchase at will of coffee. Dr. Mendel says that at a certain stage coffee extracted undiluted is the only thing that will satisfy these coffee drinkers, and that the extract is followed by opium and alcoholic stimulants. But even where the excess is confined to coffee a peculiar form of neuritis is occasioned. Dr. Mendel found many women who consumed over a pound of coffee a week. Sleeplessness is the first symptom of the pernicious effect of the stimulant.

clown?" she asked, swiftly. "I hoped that you were my friend, that at least you wished me happiness," and then she paused with flashing eyes and burning bosom; and he, distressed at her emotion, went to her side.

"Vera," he said, apologetically, "you cannot think for a moment I meant to hurt you? Surely you know that for your own sake and Adriel's you are dear to me, and that I have quite a brother's interest in you? I am well aware Elster is not brilliant, but he is a very honest fellow."

"Pray do not urge his merits further," she retorted; and, snatching her hand from his, hurried from the room, leaving Lyon perplexed and a little annoyed with himself for his intercession on the Earl's behalf.

"Why couldn't he speak himself?" he thought. "And who was to guess that the belle of the season possessed a heart? I had an idea always that she was rather mercenary. For once my discrimination is at fault. Well, Adriel will make my peace with her," and then he dismissed Vera and the whole subject from his mind, until the morrow, when Elster, almost in tears, bade him good-bye, saying lamentably, he had lost all pleasure in life since the beautiful Vera turned a deaf ear to his entreaties.

The girl herself gave no sign that she remembered the scene of the previous day, but was careless and unconcerned in her manner, as was her wont.

And on the following day Lyon saw no change in her, only Adriel knew there was some cloud upon the beauty's sky. Once or twice she had come unexpectedly upon her, to find her reading a letter, with a frowning brow and troubled face, but she had not ventured to question her as to the cause of her disquiet.

She had gone to rest one night, and was lying thinking happy thoughts of Lyon when a light tap came at her door, and, in answer to her "come in," Vera entered.

There was a bright flush upon her cheek, and her eyes shone like stars, as she came forward with one finger upon her lip, as though to enjoin silence.

"Hush!" she said, in a whisper, "grandma is in her room; and if she hears us talking will wonder and question as what we had to say to each other, that she might not know. Adriel, I want your advice and help."

"My advice isn't worth much," laughed Adriel, "but such as it is you shall have it; and, of course, if I can help you in anything, I shall be proud and glad."

"You are a dear little soul. The fact is, I am in a peck of trouble, and hardly know what to do for the best. Read this," handing her a note, "and then tell me what to do."

It was written in a good, bold handwriting, and, if short, was certainly to the point.

"You cruel, beautiful darling, how long will you torture me, and banish me from you? You say you love me. Give me some proof of this! I cannot rest, I cannot work; all my soul is filled with the fear of losing you. To-day I heard your name coupled with that of my most formidable rival, Vera, you shall not marry him or any but me. On Friday I shall follow you to Castellain House. If I do not meet you in the grounds by noon I shall come to the house. Suspense! I will bear no longer." "Marston Ruce."

"What does it mean?" asked Adriel, sitting erect. "And who is Mr. Marston Ruce?"

"It means that I am secretly engaged, and to the writer of this note," Vera answered, with averted face.

"This, then, is the reason why you were so cold to the poor Earl! But, Vera, why don't you acknowledge the engagement, and save both yourself and Mr. Ruce anxiety?"

"Because grandma has refused to sanction it, as Mr. Ruce is not my equal, either in rank or wealth. He is a struggling artist, without any influence; and I, you know, am entirely under her ladyship's control until my twenty-third birthday. She has even power, if she chooses, to stop my allow-

ance; and how can we marry on nothing? Marston must be patient and cautious. If only grandma suspected he was coming here she would send me away at once, and exile is so ignominious. Adriel, I want you to meet Mr. Ruce for me!"

"I? Oh, Vera! Surely you do not mean this? You will not send your unfortunate lover away without seeing him?"

"I must!" Vera answered, sadly. "I know so well with what entreaties he will come primed, and—and I love him so that I am as wax in his hands. He would persuade and I should yield, consent to a hasty marriage, and I should drag him down—work misery for us both. I can't do it! I won't! But you, dear, you will tell him all I say, and assure him of my love?"

"Why not write?" asked Adriel, practically.

"Because it is safer to send messages by word of mouth; but if, Adriel, you will not oblige me at so small a cost to yourself, I have no more to say, only I thought you loved me, and would help me," and she rose with her proudest air, and made as though to go.

"Stay," cried Adriel. "Dear Vera, you are wronging me, indeed! I hesitated only because I do not like to deceive grandma, but I will do anything you wish."

"Thank you, oh! thank you a thousand times! I would not trouble you, but there is no other to whom I could apply. And you will tell me one of this affair, or your part in it?"

"Not even Lyon?"

"Least of all Lyon. He is so very scrupulous, he would go at once to grandma and tell her all. You promise secrecy most solemnly?"

"You may trust me, Vera," but a sudden sense of trouble oppressed her.

CHAPTER V.

On the following Friday, as luck would have it, Lyon begged Adriel to ride with him to a neighbouring village; and she, with an air of confusion, refused, much to his chagrin; and to make matters worse, Lady Sandilands looked up from her letters to say—

"My dear child, there is no possible reason why you should not go! You have no prior engagement. Run and put on your hat."

"I would rather not, grandma, thank you. Lyon, dear, there is something I wish especially to do this morning. You will excuse me. To-morrow if you care to—"

"To-morrow!" he interrupted, kindly, "will not do. I really cannot postpone my business; but pray do not alter your engagements to suit my convenience."

The girl's face flushed distressfully, and she glanced at Vera appealingly; but that young lady was apparently absorbed in her correspondence, and seemed not to notice the storminess of the atmosphere.

"Really Lyon, I would like to go, but I cannot."

"Pray say no more on the subject," volubly, and he went from the room, with head erect, and angry eyes.

"Why, Adriel," said her ladyship, "What is the very important engagement of which I am quite ignorant?"

"I cannot tell you now," the girl answered, uneasily, and with her face steadily averted lest the other should see her tears; "but you will know some day!"

"I dislike mysteries exceedingly, Adriel," was the cold reply, and she vouchsafed no other word. The child was wretched, all through her little life she had never had a harsh word or unkind look, and the warm, young heart felt like to break.

"Oh, Vera!" she said, as soon as they were alone. "You must let me tell all to Lyon. I cannot bear to make him angry. Grandma's displeasure I can bear, but not his."

"Please yourself," Vera answered, coldly,

"but I always thought a promise was a sacred thing. If a frown from Lyon will make you break your word I am sorry I ever trusted you."

"Say no more," Adriel cried quickly. "After such a remark as yours I would die rather than fail you. If trouble comes of it, I trust to your generosity to clear me of blame; but I will speak no word in my own behalf."

Then Vera, seeing that she had gone too far, and that this little cousin of hers was not devoid of spirit, put her arms about her, and kissed her tenderly.

"I am ashamed of myself for my unkind words, and so sorry that I have vexed you; only—only, when one's whole life happiness is at stake, one is apt to be a trifle selfish. And when Lyon returns the cloud will have blown over. He will have forgotten his displeasure and its cause."

"And I spoke more hastily than I should have done, only I was a little sore at heart," Adriel answered, with quick generosity, and so they "made friends" again.

A little before noon the girl started upon her errand, charged with many messages from Vera, and an entreaty that her lover would at once return to town and await news from her; not to risk discovery by remaining in the neighbourhood of Castellain House. And Vera watched her go with a strange, cruel smile upon her perfect lips.

"Poor fool!" she said, laughing, lowly, "Puppet of my will! If you only knew! If you only knew! I could have liked you well had you not come between me and my desire; and now—ah! now I could kill you rather than see you his wife!" Her face was awful to see as she spoke those words; but the paroxysm of rage passed, and she sat down in a low chair, and with hands lightly folded, gave herself up to thoughts of the past. She had been foolish to go quite so far with Marston, but she had not foreseen how troublesome he would be; and of course when she chose she could crush him at a blow.

He was a portrait painter, and had been introduced to Lady Sandilands and her grand daughter by a celebrated art critic. He was proud and glad to accept the order. And Miss Garland thought it pleasant occupation for her leisure moments to bring him to her feet. It was not a hard task. The poor lad, he was little more, was an enthusiast; and he idealized this lovely, gracious girl, "with her sweet eyes and low replies," and in spirit worshipped the idol he had created. The portrait finished was exhibited at the Academy, and pronounced exquisite. Vera Garland became a notoriety. And then flashed with success, mad with love, and full of dreams of a glorious future, Marston Ruce ventured to tell his passion.

Vera was flattered, although in her heart she laughed at the poor enthusiast, and in her insatiable lust of conquest determined to hold this new victim hard and fast until he was no longer useful or amusing to her.

She half confessed she returned his passion. She prayed his secrecy and patience, urging that Lady Sandilands had discovered their mutual attachment, and threatened to exert her authority over her, Vera, unless she promised to dismiss her ineligible lover at once and for ever.

And the poor artist believed this story, fretted and fumed over his poverty, grew restless in his ways and moods, uncertain in his movements.

The one great passion of his life consumed him, and for him "joy was not, but love of joy should be."

"Lyon will be returning soon," said Vera to herself. "Now may the fates be propitious! If only he sees Adriel with Marston, the rest is easy. He is jealous, and she is proud. Oh, to think that I should see one lover to win the other!" and again her soft, cruel laugh rang out.

She had no pity for any but herself, not love for any but Lyon.

And alas! alas! her wish was to be fulfilled.

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Riding slowly through the grounds on his return journey, at a little distance from him, half hidden by the shrubs, he saw two figures. The one was Adriel's, the other that of a man unknown to him.

A rush of jealous rage and suspicion came upon him, and reining in his horse he watched the unconscious pair.

The girl was talking quickly and earnestly, using those pretty little gestures he knew so well, and the man with his head bent seemed listening attentively.

Lyon's heart was like fire in his breast; there was almost murder in his thoughts. That she! "Child Adriel," his little innocent, seeming love, could so deceive him! Great Heaven! was any woman true? If he could but hear their words! And then, as he waited and watched, the man lifted one of Adriel's small hands to his lips, and she showed no anger, although she drew it somewhat quickly away. Still she bade him a kindly farewell, and Lyon, watching him go, wished that he had told him where he stood.

Adriel remained motionless, her eyes following that retreating figure, until Lyon, dismounting, led his horse towards her.

She heard the sound of the boots upon the hard ground, and turning, saw her lover. The frowning brow and angry eyes told her that she was discovered.

In her dismay and distress she could not move, she could not speak, only her fair face flushed hotly; and all these signs were as proofs of her guilt to her jealous lover.

"I understand now," he said, icily, "why you would not accompany me this morning! But it was hardly judicious to allow my rival an interview in my grounds."

Dumb she stood, too hurt by his suspicion for speech to be easy, and he went on—

"I am glad to see you have the grace to be ashamed of such heartless treachery. Great Heaven! that you could be so false, you who seemed so true! Girl! is it my wealth that has tempted you? Ah, curses on it! A poor man I might have been happy!"

She ventured then to stretch out one hand to him, but he would not clasp or touch it, and with a little sob she let it fall to her side. Then she said, in a broken voice,—

"Lyon, you are wronging me. Ah! dear, be patient, and I will tell you all. In nothing have I deceived or sinned against you. Do not be so hard" (as he looked incredulous).

"I am speaking nothing but the truth, and I shall soon be able to satisfy you of that."

"Satisfy me now," he demanded. "I have a right to ask so much."

"You must wait until to-night," she answered. "I will tell you all then. Take me into the fernery after dinner."

"Why not make a clean breast of the affair now?" he said, sharply. "Who is the fellow? How and where did you first meet him?"

"I am bound to silence by a promise, but this evening I shall be released from it, and I will hide nothing from you. The secret is not my own. I have no personal secrets from you. Lyon, dear, you believe me, don't you?" and she lifted her sweet, small face to his in earnest pleading.

"I don't know what to believe," moodily; "but I will pass no judgment upon you until I have heard what account you can give of your proceedings this evening. Does Lady Sandilands know of your acquaintance with this—this—er—gentleman?"

"No."

"How long have you known him?" merely.

"Only quite recently," she answered, faintly.

"A month ago?" he demanded.

"No."

"And yet you allow him to kiss your hand, grant him private meetings! What am I to understand from this?"

She flushed upon him then,—

"To-night you will be sorry that you ever suspected me so wildly, or insulted me so grossly."

"I am waiting to be convinced," and with that he turned and left her standing in the open way.

Ah! never in the dreary future could he forget her face as then he saw it—so white, so drawn, so reproachful. At that moment, alas! alas! he only thought what a finished actress she was.

Blindly she made her way back to the house. This was their first quarrel, the first hint she had of the bitterness of love. Before she had only tasted its sweetness; and to the tender, inexperienced girl it seemed that she should die of this strange, cruel pain; that never any more would she be glad because Lyon had once doubted her truth and her devotion.

Vera, watching for her coming, felt all her pulses throb exultantly as she saw Lyon returning alone, and evidently sorely vexed.

Later, with lagging steps, came "child Adriel," very white and very weary, as though spent with a long journey; and the cruel, beautiful watcher laughed ever so softly as she waited for her coming.

At last she heard the light, slow step upon the stairs, the touch of Adriel's hand upon the door, and went forward eagerly to meet her.

"What has happened?" she cried, with affectionate solicitude. "My dearest, how ill you look? And what did Marston say? Was he reasonable? Tell me all—unless you are too ill!"

"Oh, Vera!" cried the other, pitifully, "he saw us together—Lyon, I mean; and he thinks—he thinks that I stole out to keep an appointment with a clandestine lover, as though any lady would so far forget what was due to herself." Vera winced, she was not guiltless of such an offence. "We—we quarrelled, and he said very cruel words to me."

"What answer did you make to his accusation?" asked Vera, quickly, her cheeks flushed, and her eyes bright. "Did you tell him the truth, or part of the truth?"

"I told him nothing," answered Adriel, wearily. "But I promised he should know to-night."

"Ah, no! no!" cried Vera, falling on her knees, and grasping her cousin's skirts. "Not to-night for my sake, for my sake. Be silent a little longer, and all my life I will be grateful to you. In a few days I shall be gone. I have made up my mind at last—and when I am Marston's wife Lyon will know all. Adriel! you will not betray me now?" and she clung with strong hands about her, and she seemed to weep.

The girl was sorely distressed. She was fain to serve her cousin, who had always been so good to her; but she owed a duty to Lyon. Moreover, she did think Vera a little selfish.

So she wavered and hesitated, and Vera, fearful lest she should fail in her plans even now, sobbed heavily,—

"You, who are happy in your love, should have mercy on one less fortunate. After all, it is a little thing I ask, and you can easily prevail upon Lyon to wait a few days for your explanation. If not, why I myself will tell him all—even though by so doing I spoil every chance of happiness for myself. He cannot long be angry with you. Adriel, dear, dear Adriel, I leave my fate in your hands!"

What match is the dove to the serpent in cunning? What hope was there for Adriel when opposed to such an antagonist as Vera? With a heavy sigh, she laid her arms about her cousin's shoulders.

"Dear, I will try to bear this pain for your sake!"

And with that, she gently kissed the beautiful, false mouth, and seemed to listen a moment to the apparently heartfelt thanks, spoken in a sweet, shaken voice; then she crept like a hurtling out of the room, up to the privacy of her own, and flinging herself down upon her bed, shed the bitterest tears that had ever dimmed her young eyes.

She did not go down again until the dinner-

bell rang, and then she looked so ill and weary that Lyon's heart began to relent towards her, and he longed ardently for the moment of her reconciliation.

But Lady Sandilands was seriously annoyed with her grandchild, and showed this by her studied politeness, and frigid bearing.

CHAPTER VI.

"WELL, Adriel, I am waiting for your explanation!" began Lyon, when he had carefully closed the fernery door behind him.

"Forgive me!" she answered, almost weeping. "I have none to give."

And he hardened himself against her.

"You are a trifle inconsistent," he said, icily. "This morning you promised to clear up this mystery; to-night you declare you have nothing to say. Pray which statement am I to accept?"

"Lyon," she faltered, "it is not that I could not clear myself if I were at liberty to do so; but I told you before, I am bound by a promise—the one to whom I made it will not release me yet. Oh, my dear! oh, my dear! have patience with me! I—I cannot bear your anger."

"I have just cause to be angry," he retorted. "I should be less than a man were I not. Do you suppose it can be pleasant to me to know that my promised wife is holding secret meetings with some fellow who dare not, for his own reasons, present himself at my house? Do you love him? Did you ever love him?"

And then he caught her hands in a close, and almost cruel grip, whilst he looked searchingly into her eyes.

"I love no one but you," she said, simply, "and you are my only lover!"

Her words only added to the mystery; he never thought of connecting Vera with it. The beauty was too proud to compromise herself with an ineligible lover. So he dropped Adriel's hands, and said,—

"If you are speaking truth, Heaven forgive my doubts. If you are lying to me, I shall soon know—and I never pardon deceit—systematic deceit. I will not urge you further to explain now, but I do insist that you promise never to see or speak with this fellow again."

"I cannot even do that. I gave him my word to meet him to-morrow, but after that I will obey your wish. Lyon! oh, my dear Lyon! you may trust me, indeed you may. I love you too well to sin against you, as you think I am sinning. Do not let us part in anger to-night. I—I cannot bear it."

He turned and looked at her; her small sweet face was white as the gown she wore, and tears were raining down her cheeks; the childlike, lovely mouth was tremulous with grief. He doubted her still—but he loved her well, and her tears broke down his pride.

He caught her madly to his breast.

"If you are deceiving me, Heaven is above us; I never will forgive you! For I love you—I love you with every heart-sore. You are more to me than anything I possess, and my life will be good or evil as you deal with me. Not any other woman could have prevailed upon me to do her bidding, or wait her pleasure in such a matter as this. Oh, love! my little love, be true!"

"In three days," she said, clinging to him, and weeping now for joy at his tenderness, "I shall hold myself absolved of my vow; and then—then I think you will regret a little that you were so hasty to condemn me. For the present, try to trust me more; for, surely, if perfect love casts out fear, it should leave no room for doubt."

Oh! in after days how he would remember her innocent, earnest words. How she tried to smile as she uttered them, and with what fond hands she clung about him.

"Kiss me!" she said, as they turned to quit the fernery. "Kiss me, good-night here—I am going to my room!"

And that was the last kiss he would ever give her until—until she had almost escaped

from beyond his love, and all his regrets would be in vain; when his self-reproaches would be as scorpions to sting and scourge him!

That night Adriel slept happily, rising in the morning refreshed and bright. She had told Vera her decision, and Miss Garland had said,—

"I can't expect further help from you, Adriel. You have been most good to me. At the close of three days you may tell Lyon all. Give this note to Marston, and beg him to send me a wee line by you in return. I am in sore need of comfort and assistance."

And when she was alone Vera paced up and down, up and down her room, with white face and clenched hands.

"What shall I do? What shall I do? Only three days in which to accomplish my purpose! If the next move falls he is lost to me—lost! and I love him as she never could! I will not give him to her! Oh, Lyon! Lyon! Lyon!" she wailed with outstretched, yearning hands. "Can you not love me a little since I love you so much?"

Adriel sped on her errand, glad to think she would not be called upon to meet Marston again. The young painter was waiting for her, and advanced eagerly to meet her.

"I have brought you a note," she said, gently, "and Vera begs you will entrust me with a written message. She is very depressed, and none but you can offer her comfort!"

The fair, handsome face flushed with passionate love, and the joy of believing his capricious darling had succumbed at last to his entreaties.

"Miss Vinter," he said, quickly, "if only Vera will marry me at once she shall never have a moment of wretchedness that I can avert."

"I can readily believe that," in the same gentle tone. "Now, if you please, you will write your reply. I must get back quickly."

"I will not detain you long; but—forgive me—I heard that Lady Sandilands had brought Vera here that Mr. Castellain might have a chance of proposing for her hand—that he was madly devoted to her."

"Your informant was altogether mistaken," with pretty dignity. "It is I who have the honour to be Mr. Castellain's chosen wife!"

"Thank you a thousand times for your confidence. You have allayed some very cruel doubts," and then he wrote a few lines on a page from his pocket-book, and folding it, entrusted it to the girl, saying, "When shall I see you again?"

"I do not know. I cannot consent to carry messages to and fro thus, and—Mr. Castellain objects. I think your best course would be to take matters into your own hands—and I wish you and Vera all the happiness I could desire for myself." Then she gave him her hand timidly; and presently went away, a gracious, gentle little figure, and in his heart the happy lover blessed her.

By tacit consent Lyon and Adriel avoided each other, fought shy of any *de tête-à-tête*. Each was constrained; each felt that it was better to stand aloof, until the explanation had been given and accepted. Lady Sandilands regarded her grand-daughter with displeasure, and altogether the atmosphere of the house was unpleasant.

On the second evening, Adriel, wishing to escape the discomfort of her ladyship's severe presence, declared herself tired, and begged to be allowed to retire to her room.

"Pray do as you please," answered the older lady. "I myself am weary, and shall be glad to precede you." With which she gathered her sumptuous skirts about her and went loftily out.

"Good-night," Adriel said, just touching Lyon's hand. He was looking cross and bored; and then she moved towards the door, followed by Vera.

"Good-night, dear," said the latter. "Sleep well, and have happy dreams," and she kissed the fair, pale face, which after to-night should never be glad or bright again. Then closing

the door upon the girl, she moved near the table, saying,—

"Well, Lyon, I suppose, I too, must retire, although I am not in the least bit weary." Then she stooped, and picking up a folded paper with a light laugh, remarked, "Adriel is really too careless of your *billet doux*. I will give it back to the writer," and she handed Marston's note to him.

He flushed crimson.

"I never remember writing on such paper as this!" he said.

"Lovers are proverbially forgetful," smiled Miss Garland, "but I think it is useless to deny the authorship of this. Presently Adriel will come down to look for her lost treasure, because, like all romantic girls, she sleeps with her latest love-letter under her pillow. Good-night, Lyon," and then she too went away—but not to sleep, for on this last throw depended, or seemed to depend, all the joy of her future. And Lyon sat staring at the little folded note Vera had flung down so cunningly, and discovered so naturally.

He felt sure that he had never seen it before. He knew he was doing a dishonourable thing, as little by little his hand closed over it. He breathed hard; his colour came and went. He had always been upright and honest in his dealings, but now a sudden temptation assailed him; and arguing that it was his right to satisfy himself as to the authorship of the note, he slowly unfolded it. It was dated for that very day, and ran thus:—

"MY DARLING,—

"You ask me for help and comfort. Come to me, and, by Heaven's grace, I will give you both. Let us go away together, and I will work for my wife as I know I can work. I only need your dear presence to inspire me. The knowledge that Lyon Castellain is nothing to you has removed a heavy weight from my heart. My beautiful darling, let us delay no longer. Let us take our fates into our own hands; you shall never regret reposing so much trust in your loving

"M. R."

The note dropped from Lyon's hand. This, then, was the woman he had loved and trusted—the guileless girl who had wept at his reproaches, who had sworn that her life had but one love, and he was that love. He almost cursed her in that hour—the poor innocent child who had never wronged him by thought or deed.

How little Marston Race guessed the evil his note to Vera would work! What suffering would result to Adriel and himself because of it!

Lyon paced up and down the room, half mad with rage and pain; and then his eyes falling once more upon the note, he took it up and tearing it into fragments, flung it from an open window.

"At least," he thought, "others shall not know how false she is," and then he sat down to write to her.

It was only a brief note, but though he did not guess it then it carried death with it. Then, this being finished, he scribbled a line to Lady Sandilands, begging her to consider Castellain House as her very own during his brief and compulsory absence, and promising to return as soon as business would allow.

Then he went to bed, though not to sleep, bidding his valet to call him at an abnormally early hour; so that before the ladies rose he was once more in town, which at this season was empty and dreary enough.

Lady Sandilands was first to enter the breakfast-room, and finding Lyon's note read it, wondering, somewhat, that he should have gone off so suddenly, but suspecting no evil.

"Adriel," she said, as the girl entered, "there is a note from Lyon beside your plate. He has been compelled to leave home for a short while, but will return as quickly as possible."

Adriel had no suspicion of the truth as she thrust the cruel missive into her pocket,

thinking, with a sudden gladness, that, despite their strained relations, Lyon could not leave her without some fond farewell, and longing for the meal to end that she might escape to her own room, there to read her precious note alone.

And Vera in a state of anxiety, bordering on desperation, helped her in this.

"Grandmamma," she said, "naturally Adriel is dying to read her love-letter. Don't you think we ought to excuse her now. See, she is eating nothing. May she not leave us?"

"She may if she wishes," said her ladyship, coldly, and waiting for no further speech Adriel hurried away.

Up in her own room she tore open the envelope, her eyes so bright with love, her face so flushed and expectant, that could Lyon have seen her then he must have read the truth.

But, alas! alas! this was not to be; and as the girl mastered the substance of his note, her face changed and whitened. All the red died from her lips, and she stood like one turned to stone, scarcely breathing, scarcely conscious of what had befallen her. And it was thus Vera found her.

The arch-traitress put an arm about her, and kissed the pale, cold cheek gently. Adriel never heeded her; and before she spoke she read over her shoulder the few brief, cruel lines Lyon had written.

"I no longer ask or wish for an explanation of your conduct. It is less than nothing now to me why you have acted as you have done. Pray consider our engagement cancelled. From the first it was a mistake, and I do not hold you bound to me, neither do I consider myself dishonourable in breaking the frail tie which held me to you. You are utterly and absolutely at liberty to please yourself; and under no circumstance, believe me, can I resume the old relationship between us. You and I have nothing in common, and are best apart!"

"Adriel! what has happened?" questioned Vera, seeing in a lightning flash that the game was now in her hands. "Why are you standing here like a ghost? Why do you tremble thus?"

"What does it mean?" the poor child asked, hoarsely. "I cannot understand. Last night he was kind to me, and but two days ago he vowed he loved me more than all the world beside. This is some cruel mistake. Oh, Vera! say you believe that it is!"

"My poor child! my poor child!" murmured the other. "I can offer you no consolation; men are so fickle, and Lyon is not the hero you made him. His wavering fancy has rested upon some other woman. He does not love you any longer."

"I won't believe it," Adriel cried, hotly. "He could never be so base; and it is such a little time since he and I were engaged."

"Long enough for a man to weary of his love. Adriel! Adriel! I have to say it, but there is another woman. For the time you are not first. Don't faint! Be brave!"

And as the girl reeled, she caught her in her arms, almost afraid of the effect wrought by her own words. But Adriel twisted herself free.

"Who is she?" she asked in a hoarse, strained voice; and Vera covering her face with her hands, cried,—

"Forgive me! Oh, forgive me! It is not my fault that he is false; and, in time, he will return to his old allegiance."

"You mean," questioned the unhappy victim, "he loves you?"

"He says so. It was last night. I was left alone with him, and I thought it an excellent chance to tell him all the truth, and all your goodness to me. But he would not hear me out. He vowed I should never marry Marston, and that he loved me more than life. That—oh! how can I hurt you so badly?—but you ought to know the truth that you may learn to despise him—he said he never meant to propose to you; but that you had

taken advantage of me; and then he said he loved me more than life. That—oh! how can I hurt you so badly?—but you ought to know the truth that you may learn to despise him—he said he never meant to propose to you; but that you had

taken advantage of his liking for you, and led him up to it!"

The girl turned gaspingly upon her. "Did he say those shameful words? Answer me; do not spare me—you cannot hurt me further. Are you telling me all the truth and nothing but truth?"

"Did I ever lie to you?" proudly. "Adriel, it is hard to be suspected wrongfully, and from the first I have loved you dearly."

"Yes, yes!" dearly, "and I am sorry to wound you; but I am not quite myself—not yet—not yet! I shall be braver and juster soon. Vera, what did you say when he confessed he loved you?"

"I told him some bitter truths; and because of them he has gone away. Adriel," feverishly, "what are you going to do?"

"I don't know. You must leave me to myself a little while. I must think! Go—go now! I only want to be alone!"

And all the while she shed no tear, and made no moan. But she thought in a vague way what she must do, and determined that she could never—never meet Lyon again.

To Vera she would not go for help: it was Vera he loved. She could not go to Lady Sandilands, because she was under the ban of her displeasure.

Then, all at once, she thought of home—that dear old-fashioned home, where she had been happy through eighteen years—the kindly old-world sisters who had loved her so dearly; and then she rose up.

"I will go home! I will go home!" she said, under her breath, and "there I shall be at rest."

She dressed hastily, and, counting out her little store of money, went downstairs, and away from Castellain House for ever.

No one saw her go—no one missed her until luncheon, and then Vera said she supposed she had fallen asleep in her own room, as she had seemed very weary, and it would be a shame to disturb her, so that Adriel's flight remained undiscovered until evening.

It was quite dark when she reached Stanbury; but she was too wretched to feel any fear of the lonely, gloomy streets, and soon she came to her own home.

The maids had gone to bed—they kept early hours—and Miss Aurora herself opened the door to her young sister.

She gave one swift glance at the shrinking figure, the white, woe-begone face; then shrieked,—

"Adriel! child Adriel!"

"Yes, it is I. Let me in, Aurora; I have come home to die!"

And then the spell of grief and stupor broke, the pale lips quivered, and the heavy sobs came, accompanied by a shower of bitter tears; and yet, through all her anguish it was good to feel herself safe in Aurora's loving arms, with Biddy kissing and fondling her slender hands.

The next day Lady Sandilands received a telegram from Aurora.

"The child is with us; a letter will follow." She replied by forwarding Adriel's belongings, and wiring, "Further communications not desired," and so that chapter in the child's life was ended.

CHAPTER VII.

In the days that followed, Lyon Castellain was not a happy man. He could not blot out the memory of those few bright weeks—the brightest he had ever known, or was to know again.

It was easy enough to vow with all a man's pride that he would forget one sweet, small face, and one low voice, both of which had seemed instinct with love for him.

Vera was sympathetic in an unobtrusive way; but Vera was not Adriel, and he was glad when she and Lady Sandilands removed to Scarborough.

The girl was growing desperate. True, she had separated Lyon from her cousin, but she knew that he loved her, and that if by chance

they met explanations might—possibly ensue, and she herself be exposed to the contempt of the only creature she cared for on earth.

Marston Race, too, was growing troublesome, and threatening all sorts of unpleasant things. She had hard work to keep him at bay, and began to realise how foolish she had been to compromise herself so far with him, how all but vain it is to attempt to stay the torrent of an injured man's anger.

At Scarborough Lady Sandilands found her a very distraught companion. She herself was not well, suffering with a long-standing complaint of the heart, and she missed Adriel's gentle ministrations; but believing her guilty of a clandestine love-affair, and angry with her for spoiling her own future she neither wrote nor permitted Vera to do so, although, indeed, that young lady had no wish to correspond with the girl she had so bitterly wronged.

And one night, Lady Sandilands, complaining of extreme fatigue, went early to bed, saying she should be her usual self in the morning. But when the landlady carried up her usual cup of coffee she found her dead in her bed.

So Vera was alone in the world, and in her desolation she dared to do what otherwise had been impossible. She telegraphed to Lyon, begging his assistance, and he joined her at once, taking up residence close by her.

No inquest was necessary, Lady Sandilands' medical man certifying the cause of death; and in his pity for the lonely heiress Lyon took all the responsibility of the funeral arrangements upon himself. And when the sad ceremony was ended, and he and Vera were alone, he said,—

"And now, my poor girl, what do you propose doing?"

"I am utterly alone, quite friendless," she answered, sadly. "There is nothing I can do save hire a chaperone—and I hate hirelings about me. I daresay there are many who envy me my wealth, but the poorest drudge on earth, who has a home and friends, is happier than I," and then she lifted her eyes to his, and in them he read her love for him—as she intended he should.

He was shocked and sorry for a moment; then swiftly came the thought, "We are both alone. She loves me, and if I like and esteem her—why should we not marry?"

So he took her willing hands in his, and said,—

"Vera, you know my past, and that the one love of my life was given to one who did not value it. If you will be content with a second place in my heart I will do my best to make you a happy wife."

"Lyon," she answered, "I love you, I love you! I will be satisfied with the lowest place in your affection!"

And so they were betrothed; and as Vera had no friends to receive her, it was settled they should be married as quickly as possible, and at once return to Lyon's place.

So one morning Vera, laying aside her black robes for a pretty lavender gown, walked quietly to church with Lyon, and became his wife.

Society was electrified at this *dénouement*. It had not yet quite forgotten Adriel, and it was shrewdly suspected that somewhere there had been false play.

Adriel first learned of this ill-starred marriage through the medium of a fashionable paper.

She was lying upon a couch, looking very frail and feeble, she had never been anything but ailing since her return home, and turning the leaves in a languid way, when her startled eyes fell upon the announcement.

If possible, her white face grew whiter, and a moment her lips quivered ominously. Then she said, with a little pathetic smile,—

"She said he loved her, and sometimes I have doubted her, but I know now that she told the truth," and after that day the sisters did not hear her speak of him. They saw, with breaking hearts, that slowly but surely

she was fading away from them, that soon her couch would be unoccupied. That "in the ways she used to walk she would not walk again," and that soon her place would know her no more. She never complained; no frown clouded the sweetness of her small, sweet face, no angry note jarred the music of her low and languid voice.

"She is too good for earth," Biddy said, sobbing, and Miss Aurora answered,—

"Yes. And yet, but for Lyon Castellain, she would have stayed with us."

The Castellains went abroad, and did not return until the next season was in full swing.

Lyon interested himself in politics, and made much of the wife he did not love. Most folks called him a lucky fellow, but so he did not esteem himself.

One day, as he was leaving St. Stephens, he heard himself accosted in a most unceremonious fashion.

"Hi! you there! Castellain, I want a word with you!"

And turning, he saw a fair-faced, haggard man beside him. It was Marston Race; but Lyon had only seen him once, and then at a distance, so that he did not recognise him.

He glanced coldly at him, asking, in his laziest manner,—

"Who are you, and what do you want of me?"

"I am Marston Race," answered the other, and paused, as though he thought his few words sufficient explanation.

"The man who was going to make a great name in the art-world," said Lyon, quietly. "I have heard of you, your wonderful success, and subsequent failure. But I am at a loss to conceive what it is you want with me!"

"Liar!" cried Marston, beside himself. "For treachery less than yours men have killed each other! You have stolen away my promised wife—ruined my life!"

The other interrupted him, swiftly.

"You are all at sea! Let me explain! I did not even guess she had any lover but myself. I neither knew your name, nor the tie which bound her to you. But I did not marry her. I learned her deceit soon enough to save such a catastrophe. My wife was Miss Vera Garland."

Marston stared at him in bewilderment.

"Why, I am speaking of her! It was she to whom I was bound!"

"Are you lying to me?" Lyon asked, in a dreadful hoarse voice. "Who has sent you on this errand? If you were ever my wife's affianced lover, why did you meet Miss Vinter and correspond with her?"

"I never wrote her a line in my life! But she was my ally and Vera's—at least I believed so. But I suppose she was as false as her cousin; she herself assured me I had nothing to fear from you; that she was soon to be your wife."

"There is something in this I do not understand! Come with me to my club? This mystery must be cleared up!"

They walked side by side in utter silence; but once in a private apartment, Marston Race spoke freely of the wrongs he had endured, of Vera's utter falsehood; and then all was clear to Lyon.

Oh! what a blind fool he had been so to doubt his darling! What a brutal part he had played towards Adriel!

He saw in one dreadful moment the wreck he had made of her life and his—all the sweet possibilities of joy he had hastily thrown aside, all the misery of the blank and hopeless future. He lifted his ashen face to Marston's.

"We have both suffered, but mine is the heaviest burden to bear, for I have sinned too. I have wronged the truest, gentlest heart that beats beneath the sun!"

Then a fierce desire came upon him to see Adriel once more. He must vindicate himself to her, so far as was possible. So dismissing Marston he wrote a line to his wife—his wife! The woman he loathed so heartily

now—saying he should not return that night; and then he went down to Stanbury.

A maid opened the door to him, and Miss Aurora, hearing and recognising his voice, came out into the hall.

"What do you want here?" she asked, grimly. "Have you come to work us further harm?" and she barred his passage in an aggressive fashion.

"I want to see Adriel," he answered, humbly. "I have an explanation to make. I am not so bad as you think me. Will not you let me see her?"

"It remains for her to decide whether she will admit you or not. But I will allow no exciting speech. I will not have her life shortened by agitation. Of course, you have heard she is dying, and your conscience would not let you rest?"

"Dying!" Ab, the anguish in that one word! Strong man as he was he reeled and fell against the wall. "For the love of Heaven assure me this is not so!"

"Are you sorry now? You who had no pity upon her youth and innocence! You, who drove her homewards with her broken heart, and outraged faith! There has never been a day since she returned when I have not prayed Heaven to visit your sin upon you heavily! There has never been a day when I have not thought of some way in which to avenge her bitter wrongs. Oh, man! man! could you not spare her? The poor child, the helpless, loving, trusting child?" and then her voice broke into sobs, and all her figure was shaken with her long-suppressed anguish.

"As Heaven is my witness," he said, earnestly, "I am innocent of the charge you bring against me. I can explain all—we have both been sinners against! I pray you let me see her."

"Ah, yes, Aurora," said Biddy's tearful voice, "do not deny him this one thing. Let her know the truth before she dies. It may comfort her, and make her glad again."

Was this Adriel—this frail, white atom of humanity? Where had her youth and piquancy flown? Where was the smile he knew of old? The sweet eyes were sunken, and there were heavy circles about them. The pallid lips had a mournful curve; and as he looked on her a moment, himself being unperceived, all his manhood forsook him, and he cried with an exceeding bitter cry—

"Adriel! Oh, Adriel!"

She turned quickly, saw him standing there, and forgot everything save that she loved him, and he had come again to her.

"I felt that you would come," she said, stretching out her hands to him. "Heaven is too good to let me die without seeing you;" and then he was on his knees beside her, sobbing the coarse and terrible sobs of a desperate man, and, woman like, she controlled herself that she might console him.

And when he was calmer, he told her all the gruesome story of Vera's treachery, and his own mad folly and harshness. His face was not good to look upon as he spoke of his wife, and vowed he would neither forgive nor live with her again. And then the loveliness of his poor little sweetheart's nature shone out like a bright star in a cloudy sky.

"If I forgive her, and indeed I do, you must forgive her also. It has been very hard to bear this heartache; but the worst is over now and I shall soon be at peace. But she, poor Vera! may have long years before her. Do not make them all so unhappy as these months have been to me. She sinned through love. Ah! then for love's sake forgive!" and much she urged in the same strain, fighting against his obstinacy, his anger, his just scorn and loathing of his wife; and in the end she conquered so far that he promised not to put Vera to open shame, but beyond that he would not go.

All too soon came the hour of parting. He took her in his arms well-knowing he should look on her living face no more; and surely it was no wrong to Vera that he kissed the

pale lips again and again in a very anguish of pain.

Then of her own free will the child put her arms about his neck, and gave him her last kiss, "sacred unto death," and saying—

"Good-bye, my dear one, good-bye! May Heaven go with you in all your ways, and bless you in all your doings." She loosed him, and let him go, then turned her face to the wall with a little sigh, and slept, or seemed to sleep.

Early in the morning Lyon returned, a desperate man, to his home. Vera was already up, and waiting his coming anxiously. As he entered the room she started up to meet him, but at the sight of his wild face and burning eyes recoiled, crying—

"Husband! what has happened?"

"I have learned all," he answered, heavily, "and have seen her. She is dying! and you are her murderers!"

She shrieked out then, and tried to touch him, but he thrust her back almost with an oath, and what followed between them then none knew or would ever know. But although they would spend all the weary years of their lives together, Vera would never be his wife save in name, and because she loved him wildly her punishment must perforce be great. Surely both Adriel's and Marston's wrongs could not be more bitterly revenged.

Beauty, rank, and riches she had, but never would she and happiness sleep hands again, and therein lay her punishment.

Aurora and Biddy sat watching by their darling, for the end was very near now. It was a lovely night in May, and through the open window came the scent of countless homely flowers, the last faint songs of the sleepy birds.

"It is a lovely world!" whispered the dying girl. "But for this great grief I would wish to stay a little longer with you. Oh, my dears! my dears! you must not fret overmuch. It is better I should go! far, far better! and—oh, I am very tired. You will write him when I am gone; say I thought of him to the last, and pray him to be kind to her. If it will comfort her, tell her I freely forgive her!"

Only their sobs answered her, and for awhile she lay silent; then she said, very faintly—

"Kiss me now—while I know you—and can reply to you." So they kissed her with fast falling tears, and tried for her sake to be calm.

All night she lay scarcely breathing, hardly conscious of anything around; but with the first grey streak of light in the sky she opened her dark eyes, smiled ever so faintly, and sighing, "Lyon! Lyon!" she fell asleep.

Aurora rose and reverently closed the white lids.

"She is gone!" she said, and with a bitter cry the remaining sisters clung to each other in wordless agony.

Aurora was the first to recover something like composure.

"Come," she said, in a strangled voice, "there is much to do."

"Must we leave her? Oh! Aurora, must we leave her?"

"Now we must. Oh! Biddy, that we should be living and she gone! It is too cruel! too cruel!"

Then hand in hand, with tears raining down their withered cheeks, broken and old before their time, these two poor souls went out, leaving child Adriel to her last long sleep.

[THE END.]

It is pleasant for those who take pride in national industries to know that the Spitalfields weavers are keeping up a high reputation, and that their work compares favourably with productions of foreign manufacture, not only in price but in artistic merit. Some of the brocades, which are made especially to designs, are marvelously beautiful.

FACETIÆ.

A PRETTY girl will subdue four out of every five men she meets, but it is always the fifth she wants.

Isn't a woman absurdly illogical if she tells her husband he is an idiot, and then asks him why he hasn't more sense?

SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHER: "Has not everybody the right to exercise his free will?" Little Boy: "Yes, until he is married. That's what Pa says."

PATIENT: "Help! Murder! I don't want my head pulled off. You said you were a painless dentist." Dentist: "Exactly. I never take any pains with my customers."

FAIR CUSTOMER (who has been a good hour in the shop without buying anything): "Have you nothing else you can show me?" Shopman: "Yes, madam, the door."

Who will venture to say woman is not infinitely the superior of man when it comes to that, which, in the vernacular, is familiarly termed "packing a trunk?"

JACK: "Why is dough like a man?" Bessie: "Because it's hard to get off your hands." Jack: "Oh, no! It's a thing the women knead."

A NEWSPAPER publishes the following unique advertisement: "If John Jones, who twenty years ago deserted his poor wife and babe, will return, said babe will lick the stuffin' out of him."

AN Irishman was told by a teacher that his charge for tuition was two guineas the first month, and one guinea the second. "Then, he jabbered," said the pupil, "I'll begin the second month now."

"My dear," said a sentimental wife, "home, you know, is the dearest spot on earth." "Well, yes," said the practical husband, "it does cost about twice as much as any other spot."

WITZ: "Have you brought home anything pretty for me?" Concited Husband: "Yes, myself. I looked everywhere, but there was nothing handsome to be found in the whole city."

"I know," said the reporter as he was writing out an item for the paper: "I know this is only a rumour, but I expect to get money for it." "Then," said his friend, "that's one of the rumours that gain currency."

Do your toe-joints crack as you move about in your stocking feet? If so, don't think of going into the burglar business. The successful burglar has crackless joints, and he can catch hold of a would-be sneeze and hold it back until a more fitting opportunity.

A SCHOOLBOY SCHEME.—Joseph: "This is Fatty Truro, sir." The Pedagogue: "Well?" Joseph: "There's a spankin' due to me, and I've give him two tops, a new fish hook, three chestnuts, and a lump of tefte, for him to be my substitute. Peel off, Fatty."

You young girls of sixteen: Don't be pert because you are young and pretty. After you are married, and have two or three children, and are compelled to do your own washing, your friends may remember that you were once almost impudent.

GILKHOOLY: "There is something wonderfully realistic at the scene where you smother Desdemona. I don't understand how you can make it appear so realistic." Actor Friend: "Easy enough, my dear boy. All I have to do is to imagine that Desdemona is my mother-in-law."

Five or ten minutes of embarrassing silence had sped away into the voiceless past and then a bright idea struck Mr. Nevergo. "It seems like a Quaker meeting," he observed. "Yes," answered the young woman with a hopeless, dreary glance at the clock. "I have been wondering when the spirit was going to—to move you, you know."

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SOCIETY.

CANON LIDDON is to be commemorated at Christ Church by a portrait, for which the Dean and Chapter have given a commission to Mr. Herkomer, and it will be hung in the hall.

The Duke of Clarence and Avondale has been out and about a great deal in spite of the severe cold. His Royal Highness looks a great deal better than he did some time ago.

The Prince of Wales will not return from Norfolk until the start for the Riviera, and the Princess is to make Sandringham her residence until towards the end of February.

The muzzling order stands conferred a superfluity or a farce. For the future no dog need be muzzled provided it wears a collar with the name and address of its owner legibly engraved upon it.

The Queen has lately established a large flock of Dorset Horn sheep at Osborne, instead of the Hampshire Downs which had been kept there for many years. The park now contains a fine herd of the picturesque West Highland cattle.

The latest pen picture of Dr. Koch describes him as a small man, not more than five feet five inches, but sturdily built. His features are commonplace. Constant use of the microscope has dimmed his eyes, and he is obliged to wear a triplex glass of great power.

They are still bringing out pretty shapes in bamboo furniture, which is good as well as cheap, when you procure it from reliable houses. It is so light, too, that you can carry a chair with a couple of fingers, or hold up a table with the palm of the hand quite easily.

Amoroh the Emperor Francis Joseph is only in his sixty-first year, he has shown signs of increasing feebleness of late, and people here are beginning seriously to discuss the question of the succession to the throne.

It is said that Prince Ferdinand of Roumania is a *pretendu* to the hand of little Princess Marie of Edinburgh, despite the fact that she is "over young to marry yet," being only fifteen. But betrothals at that age are common enough in Russia.

The Duke of Norfolk, the peer who takes precedence of all others, except the Archbishop of Canterbury in his capacity as spiritual peer, after the Royal blood, is forty-three. His only son and heir is very little improved in health, and his condition is a serious and enduring anxiety to his parent, who is most devoted to his ailing son.

It used to be said when any member of the aristocracy lifted a silver spoon or fork that they were afflicted with "kleptomania." This term has degenerated into "hallucination" of late. People begin to feel more tenderly, and do not like their friends to know that they cannot help a bit of thieving, so it is called in plain words "forgetfulness."

The Cleopatra bonnet, worn in compliment to this taking Egyptian's memory, is a sweet thing in pale tulle and velvet bows, with a handsome golden serpent encircling the crown. The more alive this ornament can look the better, so its head is worn uplifted. This is too much of a Pagan coiffure for church wear, but is admirably adapted for creating a sensation when paying calls or going to morning concerts.

The curious announcement is made that, in accordance with a decision of the Dutch High Court of Justice, the oath of allegiance is to be taken to "King" and not to Queen Wilhelmina. Every one knows that to the patriotism of the Hungarian magnates Maria Theresa was "Rex noscer," and that our own Elizabeth was fond of calling herself a Prince; but these were figures of speech. The Dutch monarchy is so recent that there can be no tradition in the matter. We presume that the Constitution of the Netherlands contains no interpretation by which the word "King" includes the title Queen.

STATISTICS.

The world's press is stated to include 37,000 newspapers.

The London and North-Western Railway passes through twenty English counties.

The people of the United States consume, it is said, 200,000,000 bottles of pickles annually.

The engines of the large ocean steamers make about 250,000 turns in crossing the Atlantic between New York and Liverpool.

The United States has 884 paper mills and 1,106 paper machines; Germany, 809 mills and 891 machines; France, 420 mills and 525 machines; England, 361 mills and 541 machines; Scotland, 60 mills and 98 machines; Ireland, 18 mills and 18 machines; Russia, 133 mills 137 machines; and Austria, 220 mills and 270 machines.

GEMS.

A COWARD can be a hero at a distance; it is presence of danger that tests presence of mind.

NATURE loves truth so well that it hardly ever admits of flourishing. Conceit is to nature what paint is to beauty; it is not only needless, but impairs what it would improve.

The religion that simply folds its hands and tries to look seraphic, while the devil's highway is thronged with those who are rushing headlong to the pit, is not the kind that the apostles had.

Why not pour the drink into the gutter? It is destined to the gutter at last. Why not pour it there at once, and not wait to strain it through a man, and spoil the strainer in the work?

He who thinks better of his neighbours than they deserve is seldom a bad man, for the standard by which his judgment is guided is the goodness of his own heart. It is only the base who believe all men base, or, in other words, like themselves.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

For burns, sweet oil and cotton are the standard remedies. If they are not at hand sprinkle the burned part with flour, and wrap loosely with a soft cloth. Don't remove the dressing until the inflammation subsides; as it will break the new skin that is forming.

Pie Crust.—One quart of flour, one heaping cup of lard, a pinch of salt; chop the lard and flour together and add just as little very cold water as will suffice to roll out the dough. The less water used, and the less handling you give the dough the better. Some cooks add a pinch of baking powder.

BLACK PUDDINGS.—Prepare the skins. Have some pig's blood, and while it is warm salt it a little, stir it for a while and strain it, add a cupful of milk to the blood. Have half as much chopped suet as of dried oatmeal, and half as much chopped onions; plenty of salt and pepper to taste, some nutmeg if it is to be very nice. Stir all this into the blood to make it pretty thick; fill the skins, tie, prick, and boil gently three-quarters of an hour.

SMALL TEA BISCUIT.—One-quarter of a pound of flour, one quarter ounce of butter, half-ounce of firm, sweet lard, a little less than a gill of milk, one teaspoonful of baking powder, and one saltspoonful of salt. Mix the baking powder with a portion of the flour and sift it into the rest of the flour through a fine sieve; then rub the butter, lard, and salt through the flour until quite fine; pour in the milk, mix lightly, place on the board which has been well floured, and roll it with the rolling-pin without kneading. Cut with a small cutter, prick up and bake in a hot oven until brown on top.

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE Oriental physicians of India practiced vaccination long before the doctrine was announced by Doctor Jenner.

It is estimated that to collect one pound of honey from clover, 62,000 head of clover, must be deprived of nectar, and 3,750,000 visits from bees must be made.

ANESTHETICS were known in the days of Homer, and the Chinese two thousand years ago had a preparation of hemp, known as "una yo," to deaden pain.

JACOB'S well, and the plot of ground surrounding it, have been sold by the Turkish Government to the Greek Church for four thousand pounds.

THOSE who have a tendency towards consumption should take easy vocal exercise, no matter how thin and weak their voices may seem to be. They will find a result at times far surpassing any relief afforded by medicine.

PLATINUM and silver can each be drawn into wire many times smaller than a human hair. The former metal has been drawn into wire so fine that 27 of them twisted together could have been inserted into the hollow of a hair; that is, if a human being or a human-made machine could be found minute and precise enough for such a delicate undertaking.

"ELECTRICAL flat irons" are now in the market, or, more correctly, iron heated by the electric current. The interior contains a set of coiled wires, through which the electrical current passes and heats the wires red-hot. The latter are arranged between protecting sheets of mica and asbestos. By turning a switch the flat iron at once heats up ready for use.

The possibilities of insurance seem endless. It has been reserved for an ingenious broker to offer to insure against what may be best termed "household negligence." The argument is certainly feasible—a shipowner insures against the negligence of his servants, the officers and crew of the vessel, so why should not a household insure against similar risks? Time alone can prove whether complete assurance can be obtained.

It is reported that a Hebrew gentleman in New York owns the only genuine and perfect holy shakel in the world. The relic is said to be 3,400 years old, and was used in King Solomon's Temple perhaps, although it would doubtless be difficult to prove this. There is but one other similar coin in existence, and that is in the British Museum. It is also a holy shakel, but is not so well preserved, and a portion of it has been cut away.

In order to tell the day of the week of any late, take the last two figures of the year, add a quarter to this, disregarding the fraction, add the date of the month, and to this add the figure in the following list, one figure standing for each month: 3 6 6 2 4 0 2 5 1 3 6 1. Divide the sum by 7, and the remainder will give the number of the day in the week, and when there is no remainder the day will be Saturday. As an example, take March 19, 1890. Take 90, add 22, add 19, add 6. This gives 137, which, divided by 7, leaves a remainder of 4, which is the number of the day, or Wednesday.

A GERMAN medical scientist has declared that a form of inebriety due to the excessive use of coffee is on the increase in Germany, and that its worst form is found among the women of the upper working classes, where the wages permit of the purchase at will of coffee. Dr. Mendel says that at a certain stage coffee extracted undiluted is the only thing that will satisfy these coffee-drinkers, and that the extract is followed by opium and alcoholic stimulants. But even where the excess is confined to coffee a peculiar form of neurosis is occasioned. Dr. Mendel found many women who consumed over a pound of coffee a week. Sleeplessness is the first symptom of the pernicious effect of the stimulant.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

ALICE.—The Prince Consort died December 14, 1861.
R. WILLIAMS.—You must ask someone in the trade. We have no information on the subject.

B. B.—The town of Asnières is in France, in the Department of the Seine.

BALLY.—The marriage before a registrar is perfectly legal.

GREEK.—The *y* in *Psycho* is long. The word is derived from *Psyche*, meaning the soul.

G. N.—The Patent Office is at 25, Southampton-buildings, London, W.C.

ONE INTERESTED.—The Abergele Railway accident was on August 30, 1868.

J. SMITH.—You can detain the lodger's goods, but may not sell them.

BOATMAN.—The length of the Thames is usually given as 220 miles, and that of the Severn as 210 miles.

PHIL.—So far as we can tell your agreement remains in force, but you had better show it to a lawyer.

H. S.—The first name is pronounced as if spelled "Mef-fo-fo-fo," and the second as if "Guk-ih."

MONTYMER.—The population of Ireland in 1881 was 5,174,836.

VERY POOR.—If your whole income is under £150, you are exempt from income-tax.

THE CURATE.—The Naval Volunteer Home Defence Association was formed in 1885, and broken up in 1889.

FROZEN.—In 1881 the frost lasted from January 7 to January 23, and the minimum temperature registered during that period was six degrees.

COUNTRY COUNTESS.—Mincing-lane is a street in London, so-called from buildings which formerly belonged to the Minchins, or sons of St. Helen's.

H. H.—If the occurrence was purely an accident, and not due to any negligence on the part of the driver, he is not responsible for the damage.

SCHOOL BOY.—Longwood was the name of Napoleon Bonaparte's villa, on the island of St. Helena, occupied by the Emperor during his exile.

NELLIE.—The letters R.S.V.P. on cards of invitation are an abbreviation of "Répondez s'il vous plaît"—please reply.

PUNKED.—Under the English notation there are six cyphers in a million, eighteen in a trillion, and thirty-six in a sextillion.

SILLY FRED.—Whenever and in whatever form a receipt is given for a sum of £2 or more it must be stamped.

F. N.—Practice is the only thing likely to stretch the fingers. You do not state your age. It may be that your hand will grow.

GRITTY.—If you use a crest on your notepaper, you will be required to pay the tax on armorial bearings, which is one guinea per annum.

MURIEL (Lincoln).—If you are a girl you will have nothing more to do with such a wise. Most likely she is serving half-a-dozen others as she is serving you. Such girls do not make good wives.

BOVER.—1. Muller is pronounced as if spelled mu-ler, the accent on the first syllable. 2. The accent on the word crematory, a place for the incineration of the dead, is on the second syllable.

PHILIM.—Fintarch makes the game of dice an early invention of the Egyptians. Herodotus ascribes it to the Lydians. It was introduced into France in the reign of Philip Augustus.

VENTA.—The 25th anniversary of a marriage is the silver wedding, and the golden wedding is on the 50th. There is no special designation for intermediate anniversaries.

THE SQUIRE.—The census will be taken on the night of the first Sunday in April of next year. The arrangements are under the control of the Superintendent Registrar.

TAVY.—We would meet it by not meeting it. If the elderly lady is distressed by your courtesy to her sister, do not notice her distress. Time will heal her sorrows. The matter probably will not appear of much consequence to you three months from now.

UNHAPPY.—Sentences to two terms of imprisonment for two months—the periods to run consecutively—would be four months in all. If the two sentences were ordered to run concurrently, the prisoner would be released at the end of the two months.

EMERIL.—Emchre is said to be a corruption of the word *carle*. It is thought by some to have been first played by the French settlers in Louisiana, but at what date is uncertain. By others, it is supposed to have been invented in Pennsylvania.

SEA BOY.—The Bay of Biscay takes its name from Biscay or Vizcaya, one of the old Basque provinces of Spain, now including Biscay, Guipuzcoa, and Alava. The Basques are believed to have been the original inhabitants of the country before the Spaniards. They do not mix with the latter, but have customs and, to a large extent, a language of their own. It is therefore easy to understand that the earliest navigators would identify the bay with the inhabitants of its shores.

JOSEPHINE.—As to what will prevent hair from falling out, I will say, take the water that common white potatoes are boiled in, let it settle and cool, drain off the clear water, and wash the scalp thoroughly several times. It is sure.

WESTBROOK.—You are a photographer, we presume. In that case apply without delay dilute cyanide of potassium to the nitrate of silver stains, repeating the application until the stains have disappeared. Work the solution round and round upon the stain with the end of a cork.

SUFFRAGER.—Take plenty of outdoor exercise, and eat abundance of ripe fruit, both of which are sure enemies to the cause of your trouble. No two cases are exactly alike, but all can be cured by the two things mentioned above. All medicine given by doctors only affords temporary relief.

ANNIE BROWN.—If a husband provides a proper home for his wife, he is not liable to claims from her if she leaves him without his consent and without just cause. We know of no means to compel a wife to return to her husband except by a suit for the restitution of conjugal rights.

ISCHCAPE.—The porpoise, which is common along the Atlantic coast, and is often seen in bays and near the mouths of large rivers, is usually five to six feet long, bluish black on the back, and white beneath. It lives all the time in the water, but breathes air, and has to come to the top of the water to blow, like the whale.

LITTON.—1. The Gunard Line, one of the best from Liverpool. 2. By going in February you would find winter still in possession, but you would be in advance of the "rush." 3. No difficulty in getting lodgings. New York is filled with boarding-houses. All the better if you have letters of recommendation with you.

ALL KINDS TO MAKE A WORLD.

We cannot all be soldiers and brave the battle's din,
 Nor can we all be righteous and hate the sight of sin;
 Some must be poor and lowly, others be proud and strong,

For it takes all kinds of people to move this world along.

Some must be mild and gentle, others be wicked and bad,

We cannot all be merry, nor can we all be sad,

But all must be true to nature, though it be right or wrong;

For it takes all kinds of people to move this world along.

Some must be carriers of water, and others carriers of sand;

Some must be ploughing the billows, while others are ploughing the land;

Some should live in the desert, others the ballroom throng;

For it takes all kind of people to move this world along.

Some must be good, some must be bad, some must be evil, and others glad,

But if you be true to your conscience it will be true to you,

And whether you die to-morrow, or whether you live too long,

You'll count one in the many thousands that move this world along.

H. B.

BETH.—A woman should be able to make up her own mind on the question of choosing a husband. In the case of which you refer, where the hate between wealth and friendship on the one hand, and love and poverty on the other, the chances are that she will regret her choice, whichever it may be.

TIM.—The Emperor himself was Commander-in-Chief of the French army in the Franco-Prussian war. General Le Bon's second, succeeded by Marshal Bismarck. The Prince Imperial was only a lad of fourteen when war was declared, but we do not know his nominal military rank.

DICK.—1. Porpoises live chiefly on fish and molluscs and root like hogs in the sand in search of clams, sand oles, and other food. 2. Yes, porpoises sometimes swim in groups and keep so close to one another that they look like one long animal, giving rise, in the opinion of some writers, to the many sea-serpent stories that find their way into the daily papers.

DOT'S TEDDY.—You may quite appropriately send either gloves or slippers on her accepting the invitation, and on the morning of the ball may send flowers. Like Job of old, you may do "all this and sit not," except you send either gloves or slippers a size too large. If she is not over five feet, 6½ gloves and 3 slippers should suit.

NED.—Do not think of going to the States as a baker. That trade is not much, if anything better than here. If, however, you have made up your mind to risk it, your best course is to go straight to New York, and at the Labour Bureau there ascertain where men in your trade are most likely to find work. No positive or reliable information obtainable here.

SIR HUMPHREY.—We don't know any way in which you could succeed in obtaining a berth to work your passage out to Australia. If there were no other reason for declining to accept your services, the Companies know they must pay higher wages for the return voyage to anyone they engage in Australia than they would have to pay to one hired here.

MURIEL.—There is no masculine equivalent for Margaret, but the name in its feminine form has been given to a man, greatly to his mortification, we have no doubt. If we had to suggest a synonym for a boy it would be Margatt, which has a sufficiently Danish look and sound to be likely to pass unchallenged.

SEAT.—The medical properties of distilled vinegar are the same as those of common vinegar, but the former, being purer and not liable to spontaneous decomposition, is preferable for pharmaceutical purposes. Wine vinegar furnishes a stronger and more aromatic distilled vinegar malt or older vinegar.

MAS V.—Impossible for us to say where the lad can be certain of success, but he should endeavour to get an engagement through a seedman and nurseryman in town who may tell him where he is likely to get a place. If he cannot take him into his own nursery ground. Letter will go to Calcutta in 21 days. Quite enough to work upon. No, must go to sea in a sailing ship.

JEM.—The Westinghouse brake can be fitted to any train, but Companies have not thought it necessary to apply it to goods waggons on account of the expense. Sardines are a small fish of the herring species, taking their name from the fact that they were first "tinned" in Sardinia, in the Mediterranean. They are also caught on the Atlantic coasts of France, Spain, and Portugal.

TOBIAS.—We don't see where your profit would be got. In the first place, as a tobacco manufacturer you must have a license, costing £5 yearly, and pay 8s. 6d. per pound of duty on every pound of tobacco you imported. Even if you got your stock from local importers it would be weighed with the duty. Better to set up business as a retailer.

LADY BRIDGEWORTH.—Milk mixed with lime-water is a beneficial drink for dyspepsia. For the latter sake four ounces of quicklime with a little water, and gradually add enough water to make a gallon in all. Let it stand three hours, then bottle it in glass-stopped bottles, putting a portion of the undissolved lime in each bottle. When you want to use some pour off the clear liquid from the top.

H. BINE.—As long as you succeed in keeping your children from actual contact with those affected with the whooping-cough you need have no fear of infection; but, if they are allowed to mingle, we do not know anything that can save them. Do not let them fast or be unduly exposed to the weather. Neither must you "soften" them by confinement to the house. Just keep them in a naturally healthy way.

RACQUET.—The captain is over the chief engineer at sea, in so far as that he may direct when and what rate the engines are to be worked; but as the engineer is responsible not only for the engines and boiler but for the fuel consumed, he must "log" instructions received from the captain regarding the rate to be maintained, or what is the same thing, the quantity of coal to be burned daily, and he may refuse to obey an order which, in his judgment, would imperil either engines or boilers, or the ship.

HERBERT.—The question seems simple, but for all that the answer is difficult in the extreme. One thing certain is that the right time to go to the States is in spring, and on arrival you will find that a stone-cutter you have to pay something like £10 of entry-money to join the union, without which you cannot obtain work at your trade. During the succeeding six months you may be well employed, but in the winter there is nothing doing, and should you return here then, to return again next spring, the entry-money must be paid over again. Even under such adverse circumstances some men make a little money at the trade.

F. A.—The adoption of surnames was not a matter of system, or even of design. It was a matter of growth and development. When the Johns of a neighbourhood became too numerous for ready reference, one would be called John the Smith, another John the Shoemaker, another John the Tailor, and so on, according to each one's occupation. After a while, the "the" would be dropped, and it would be John Smith, John Shoemaker, etc.; and the same course would be taken with the Jameses, the Williams, and all the rest. The sons of these persons would at first be called John's son, Smith's son, James's son, William's son, etc.; and these appellations would soon wear down into Johnson, Smithson, Jameson, and Williamson. And so on, by this means and that, and for one reason and another, the surnames of mankind, after having in some cases undergone all manner of changes, have come about, as they now are.

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